



A theological evaluation of the government system in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe

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DECLARATION

I, EZEKIEL BALOYI, hereby solemnly declare that this research: “A theological evaluation of the government system in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe” is my own original work, and all the sources consulted have been acknowledged by complete references, and that the research has not previously, whether in its entirety or partially, been submitted by me or any other person for the purposes of this degree at this, or any other University.

E. Baloyi

Signature

Date: May 2020

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on an evaluation of the relevance of church government in the RCZ in the light of the doctrine of the church. Church government is one of the major components of the doctrine of the church, that is to say, it is one of the sub-themes to be dealt with in the doctrine of the church. This study presents some arguments to prove whether the church government of the RCZ is theologically relevant to the doctrine of the church.

The study is being conducted by a minister of the RCZ and it will therefore be approached in the perspective of the Presbyterian/Reformed tradition. The researcher reviewed a variety of articles from existing literature within the theological libraries, Synod minutes and Rules and Regulations of the RCZ. The researcher uses the following research methodologies:

- 1) An evaluation of the relevant literature of the RCZ;
- 2) A review of relevant literature of the doctrine of the church mainly in the Reformed tradition;
- 3) Exegesis of biblical passages in the New Testament such as that of I Timothy 3:1-12 , and Titus 1:5-9;
- 4) And lastly, a theological evaluation is undertaken by means of a comparative analysis.

Key concepts in this study: Doctrine, Church, Theological, Relevance, Church Government, Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsing fokus op die evaluering van die toepaslikheid van kerkregering in die GKZ (Gereformeerde Kerk in Zimbabwe) in die lig van die leer oor die kerk. Kerkregering is een van die hoofkomponente van die leer oor die kerk, dit wil se, dit is een van die sub-temas wat bespreek moet word in die leer. Hierdie studie sal enkele argumente aanbied om te bewys dat die kerkregering van die GKZ teologies relevant is ten opsigte van die leer oor die kerk.

Hierdie studie word gevoer deur 'n predikant van die GKZ en dit sal dus benader word met die perspektief van die Presbiteriaanse /Gereformeerde tradisie. Die navorser sal 'n verskeidenheid artikels uit bestaande literatuur van Teologiese biblioteke, Sinodale notules en Reels en Regulasies van die GKZ bestudeer. Die navorser sal die volgende navorsings metodologie aanwend:

- 1) Evaluering van toepaslike literatuur van die GKZ
- 2)) Bestudering van relevante literatuur oor die leerstelling van die kerk veral in die Gereformeerde tradisie
- 3) Eksegese van bybelse uittreksels in die Nuwe Testament soos bv. die van Timoteus 3:1-12, en Titus 1: 5-9;
- 4) Laastens, word 'n teologiese evaluering onderneem dmv 'n vergelykende ontleding.

Sleutel terme: Leer (Doktrine), Kerk, Teologies, Toepaslikheid/Relevansie, Kerkregering, Gereformeerde Kerk in Zimbabwe.

Dedication

I dedicate this study to all my beloved fellow Christians of all ages in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ).

Abbreviations

ARC – African Reformed Church
B. Div. - Bachelor of Divinity (Degree)
CARA – Christian Radio in Africa
CCAP – Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
DRC (CP) – Dutch Reformed Church-Cape Synod
DRC (OFS) – Dutch Reformed Church-Orange Free State Synod
DRCM- Dutch Reformed Church Mission
DTh – Doctor of Theology (Degree)
MTh – Master of Theology
NIV – New International Version
PENYA – *Paridzai Evhangeri muNyika ye Afrika*
PhD – Doctor of Philosophy (Degree)
RCA – Reformed Church in America
RCU – Reformed Church University
RCZ - Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
RCSA- Reformed Churches of South Africa
ZIMCHE – Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education

Abbreviations for the Bible Books (officially according to King John's translation)

Matt – Matthew

Acts – Acts

2 Cor – 2 Corinthians

Phil – Philippians

2 Thess – 2 Thessalonians

Titus – Titus

James – James

1 Jon – 1 John

Jude

Mark – Mark

Rom – Romans

Gal – Galatians

Col – Colossians

1 Tim – 1 Timothy

Philem – Philemon

1 Pet – 1 Peter

2 Jon – 2 John

Rev - Revelation

Jon – John

1 Cor – 1 Corinthians

Eph – Ephesians

1 Thess – 1 Thessalonians

2 Tim – 2 Timothy

Heb – Hebrews

2 Pet – 2 Peter

3 Jon – 3 John

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to this study

Being a minister in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, hereafter referred to as RCZ¹ has an input since the background of this study is founded on the experience which I have attained in different congregations pastored during the past nineteen years. All the ministers in the RCZ who have pursued post-graduate studies have done their research in different fields of theology other than that of the Systematic Theology. My sense of responsibility arose from the fact that the RCZ needed a well-researched document on the doctrine of the Church government for her to make an impact in all that she is doing. This is the fact which enthused me to do a Master's degree in Theology at the Stellenbosch University. In my Master's research², I once again realised that while the Church is governed by different offices, I should be focusing on the judicial assessment of the Office of the deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. This was the first step in the specialisation and completion of my Master's degree, which increased my research experience so that I could advance to a further qualification (Badenhorst 2008:18).

Furthermore, the RCZ uses the Apostles' Creed³ as part of its liturgy whereby it confesses that it believes in the holy Catholic Church. This theological concept of the doctrine of church government motivated me to rethink and analyse the fact that the RCZ as Church is it still relevant to the ethos/philosophy of the doctrine of church government system in a theological way.

¹ RCZ is the acronym for Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

² My earlier study at my Master's in Theology was a literature study on the Office of the Deacon in the RCZ. It was an assessment of the Office of the deacon in the RCZ along Church Polity lines which led me to further my research on the Doctrine of the Church government (Baloyi 2016). The research was presented at the faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University.

³ The Apostle's Creed is part of the Creed in the Rules and Regulations of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2010:1-2 which is hereafter referred to as RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*).

As an RCZ pastor for the past nineteen years, I noticed that there is quite a lot of misunderstanding regarding the doctrine of the church government because some of the members referred to the church as “their” church instead of referring to Christ as the Head of the church (Coertzen, 1998:11-12). On the other hand it became a serious concern for me as a pastor in the RCZ to find out that, though the church is blessed with gifted scholars in the areas of practical theology, missiology, ecclesiology, youth ministry, biblical studies, and community development, yet the field of systematic theology as an academic and theological discipline, has not been explored by any pastor or church member of the RCZ.

This chapter presents the aims, and objectives of the research, the relevant questions to be answered, the problem statements and the methodology through which the research questions were studied and investigated (Acodesin 2018:2).

1.2. Existing relevant literature on the status of the research

Badenhorst (2008:165) noted that when one is doing a literature review, one is in a position to evaluate the sources through reading, taking notes and rewriting the answers to the problem statement in the dissertation/thesis.

A preliminary study of literature on the doctrine of the church government system show that the majority of scholars agree that the Church is the community of true believers. According to Grudem (1994:853) Jesus Christ himself is the one who builds his church by calling his people to Himself. He holds that the Church is acknowledged through its nature, marks and its purpose in the world. Janssen (2006:123) maintains that the church is called into actuality by God, established by the Word, and a creation of the Spirit. God uses the church for the proclamation of salvation. The Church Order of Dort (1619)⁴ declares that in order to maintain good order in the

⁴ See annexure 1 which is the Church Order of Dort (1619). This Church Order of Dort (1619) and the principles of the Bible are the guide of this study because Church Orders of all Reformed Churches across the globe were formulated within the background of the two sources mentioned above. The Church Order of Dort is accepted as the only and final authority in this study because its foundation is based on the Bible and the confessions. This Church Order contains the principles for the maintenance of the God given order and justice as well as proposed practical applications of all the principles of church government (Vorster, 1999:14). The *RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* and other Church

Church of Christ, it is necessary to have in it offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline. This Church Order is used in this study as the primary source together with the Bible.

Karkkeinen (2002:128) in Chapter 11 of his book, “*An Introduction to Ecclesiology*” concludes that the Church is the church of Jesus Christ, subject to his Lordship alone. Migliore (2004:41) argues that the original witness of Scripture to God’s revelation in Jesus Christ is imparted to us through the witness of the church. The church is the people of God. This literature review helped in this ‘research to evaluate whether the teachings of the RCZ are still in line with the original teachings of the doctrine of church government system. Schwarz (1995:184) notes that the church is a group of believers which comes together to worship Jesus as the Lord and Saviour, and it traces its beginnings back to the first Pentecost following Jesus’ death and resurrection. According to Moltmann (1993:1) the church is referred to as the people of God and will give an account of itself at all times to the God who has called it into being, gathered it and liberated it.

Harvey (1982:25) defines the church as an assembly summoned or called out, a select body separated from other groups of people. The word ‘church’ is used in the New Testament to refer to a specific, local assembly of Christians, organized for the maintenance of the worship, the doctrines, the ordinances, under the discipline of the gospel, with Christ as the Head of the Church (Harvey 1982:27). O’Donovan (1992:151) mentions that the church consists of people who trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, regardless of their race, ethnicity, nationality, or position in life. Berkouwer (1976:15) and Coertzen (1998:15) acknowledge that the Church is and must remain further down to the authority of Christ who is the Head of the Church. Volf (1998:128) agrees with Berkouwer and Coertzen that the Church is the gathering of the people of God which is based on the coming of the kingdom of God in his person. According to Harper (1977:103) the Church is described as the people of God gathered together, i.e. all those that have been baptised, living together in co-responsibility.

Orders of the Reformed Churches worldwide used the Church Order of Dort as the blueprint in the formulation of their Church Orders.

Dreyer (2010:15) claims that the Church is governed by Jesus Christ, the only King. He governs by his Word and Spirit. Therefore, Church governance is spiritual, with the explicit objective of leading people to glorify God with their lives. Because of this the Church Order of the Reformed Churches of South Africa here after referred as RCSA article 55 says; in order to maintain the pure doctrine in the congregation and to defend against false doctrines and heresies, the minister of the Word and elders turn to the means of instruction, refutation, warning and exhortation during the exercise of their different offices, during the ministry of the Word, during catechism instruction and during house visitation (RCSA Church Order, 2017:40; ACTA, 2009:456). This article shows that the minister of the Word and the elders work together in matters of church governance. Christ as the head of the Church uses the offices of the minister of the Word and the elder to govern His church.

Coetzee (2019:5) declares that Jesus Christ is the only Head of the church. The church is the gathering of all who truly believe in Christ. Therefore, the Church of Christ is one and the unity is a unity in truth and faith, founded on the Word and confession. More so too, for the church government is restricted to the office of the minister and the elder. In the RCZ the government system of the church is not restricted to the office of the minister and the elder only because the office of the deacon participates in the government of the church (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:30).

1.3 Problem statement

The Christian church of today is facing challenges especially on the issue of church governance and structural organisation; the RCZ is not spared in this dilemma. The challenge which is needed now is for the Church to defend the doctrine of church government system with Scriptures and the Church Order of Dort (1619) against the growing Charismatic movements and ministries which are now rapidly increasing in every corner of the country. People want power and leadership positions be it in the Church or secular world.

The systems in the church are now becoming polarised because of what is taking place in the secular world whereby the political governing structure can influence church government

system. The RCZ is not spared because it is living in the same environment. Doctrinal beliefs of the church and government system must be protected against social forces. The church can only be relevant if it knows how to respond to arguments posed by contemporary teachings on issues concerning suitable system of church government.

There are two reformers who contributed largely to the growth of the reformed church government and these were Bucer and Calvin (Du Plooy 1998:56). The two understood the need and the necessity for the self-governing of the church and for differentiating between the affairs of the state and those of the church (Du Plooy, 1998:56).

The RCZ has been at the forefront in applying various ways in the spreading of the Word of God as afore-mentioned in the book authored by Van der Merwe⁵, “*From Mission Field to Autonomous Church in Zimbabwe*”. In his book he describes the various ways that such schools, hospitals, and special schools were built by missionaries as a way of spreading the Word of God in the country. In this research I will analyse the RCZ to see whether the church government structures of it are still operating and existing as a true church and in a theological way. If the Church pay no attention to the spiritual and physical needs of the people, then there is no difference between what church/faith based organisations do and what secular agencies do (Yoms 2015:5). The Church-concept is seen as one of the main themes of the biblical doctrines whereby God reveals His redemptive work through the preaching of the Word by the Church (Enns 2008:377).

Du Plooy (1998:57) notes that Calvin was a disciple of Bucer and he tailed him in many ways. Calvin was of the opinion that the local church is the primary place where the authority of the church is bequeathed in Christ but He uses the church as his instrument. It became clear that Calvin’s vision of the church toe the line to that of the New Testament.

Du Plooy (1998:58) noted the following about Calvin:

⁵ Van der Merwe was a missionary from South Africa at the Cape Synod who laboured in the RCZ as a Congregation minister and, lecturer among other things. He is the author of the book “*From Mission Field to Autonomous Church in Zimbabwe*”. The book is rich with the Church History of the RCZ. His contribution has been well -received in the RCZ, even up to today.

- The doctrine of the church is not meant to satisfy curiosity, but to be taught in the grace of God so that we may grow in piety and devoutness.
- Christ Himself is the One who builds up his church, and the offices in the church are principal nerves by means of which God binds the body of Christ together. The point of departure leads to the view of the church as an institution, and to the instauration and building of the church.
- It is the task of every believer to support in building up the church, since the gifts which we have been blessed with, are not there to use for our own benefit but for the benefit of the congregation (Heb. 5:12 and 1 Cor. 14:26).
- The very essence of the building up of the church is to mature in grace and is based on faith and repentance.
- The doctrine and church government cannot be separated since the discipleship of Christ is the result of the preaching of the doctrine. The church order is meant to be instrumental in this. It must serve as a channel or passage for the true doctrine which is the soul of the church.
- Consequently, the church order must be composed on the basis of, and in the closest relation with the Word of God, in order to serve towards the building up of the church.

The preaching of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of church discipline, all function as basic elements of church order, says Du Plooy, (1998:59).

Here there is no reference of the office of the deacon because the preaching of the Word and administration of the sacraments is the duty of the minister whilst the exercise of church discipline is the duty of the elder.

In her book, *“The essential guide to doing your Research Project”*, O’Leary (2014:45) proclaims that developing a well-articulated research question is crucial because it defines the project, sets boundaries, gives direction, and acts as frame of reference for assessing one’s work. On the same

note it is of great importance for the researcher to come up with a central research question to guide him /her to answer and focus upon the problem statement of his/her research.

The aim of the researcher is to present a systematic study so that readers can realize the relevance or irrelevance of the system of church government of the RCZ in comparison with the teachings of the Bible and other Reformed Churches worldwide.

1.4 Central Research Question

The central question of this research seeks to find an answer to the following:

Are the teachings of RCZ's system of church government relevant to those of the Bible and other Reformed Churches globally?

This research shall be conducted in an analytical way with these questions in mind:

- ✓ What is the historical development of the RCZ's doctrine of church government system?
- ✓ What is the historical development of the doctrine of church government since the formulation of the Church Order of Dort (1618-1619)⁶?
- ✓ What does the Bible teach/say about the teachings of church government?
- ✓ What is the relevance of the RCZ's church government system in comparison to the teachings of the Bible and to those of the Reformed teachings?

1.5. Research aim and objectives

1.5.1 Research aim

The aim of this research is to come up with a comprehensive document as to whether the RCZ's type of church governance system is relevant to the doctrine of church government as it is presented in the Bible and other Reformed teachings on church government. It will provide the

⁶ Cf. Annexure 1.

Church and other readers with the current belief on church government as it is portrayed in the Bible; more so too, if all the questions are answered correctly, then the document will present a comprehensive analysis of the relevance of the RCZ's church government system in its contemporary context and the church at large.

1.5.2 Research objectives

This research evaluates the doctrine of church government within the perspective of the RCZ in a theological understanding. The research pursued the following objectives:

- To discuss the history of the RCZ's church government system concisely since its establishment in 1891.
- To discuss the doctrine of church government since the Synod of Dort 1618 which authored the Church Order of Dort (1619).
- To have a look at various Biblical verses about the principles of church government.
- To identify the relevance of the RCZ's church government system to the original Reformed teachings as portrayed in the Bible.

1.6 Central theoretical argument

Although the church government system of the RCZ is mainly in accordance with the Reformed tradition, it also deviates in some important aspects from Biblical and Reformed principles of church government.

1.7 Research methodology

This research is done within the paradigm of Reformed/Presbyterian theology and falls within the department of Dogmatics or systematic theology. By its nature it is good if Dogmatics is discussed under the heading of conceptual/theoretical research, focusing on the context of the discourses analysed within the framework of real- life experiences in a natural setting (Mouton

2001:70). A literature study is the only way to provide a comprehensive understanding of the doctrine of the church government and has helped the researcher to understand and analyse existing literature related to the research area (Yoms 2015:11). Church documents of the RCZ, such as Synod Minutes and Doctrinal and Research Committee minutes, Church magazines and church orders (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*) have been consulted.

The researcher responded to all the questions by following the methodological approaches listed below:

1.7.1 Literature review of the RCZ

The researcher studied all the relevant sources about the RCZ, namely the literature review, Synod minutes, Acts, Rules and Regulations (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*), and Church magazines/journals. An appraisal of existing literature on the principal question of the study was carried out to set the step of the research. The Murray Theological College, North West Library, thesis and dissertations and journals, Acts, Synod minutes and Church Orders were consulted to provide relevant information to respond to the research questions. However, there was some limitations because some of the valuable sources are in Afrikaans which makes it difficult because the researcher is not well versed in that language.

1.7.2 Doctrine of church government

A review of the existing literature about the doctrine of the church with the main emphasis on church government system, was discussed. The church is referred to as the people of God (Kung, 1960:107). In this chapter the assemblies of the church, also referred to as church government system, are explained/ investigated in detail (Kung 1960:363). Du Plooy (1998:59) maintains that in the doctrine of church government Christ is the one who forms up his Church and the offices in the church are the systems by means of which God binds the church together. The utmost authority of the church is Jesus Christ; therefore the church should recognize that authority because the Church is administered by its King, Jesus Christ, through His Word and Spirit (Dreyer, 2005:893). Christ uses the offices as instruments to govern His church.

1.7.2.1 Biblical Exegesis

Biblical exegesis is another line of attack to be applied in the approach of this research. As far as exegesis is concerned, the Grammatical-historical method was applied: the researcher studied some Bible verses in a Reformed hermeneutical manner. Passages such as Acts 15; 20:28-35, 1 Timothy 5:17, Ephesians 4:11-12, Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 were considered for this study. The reviews of relevant literature were studied as a way of expounding the subject matter further. The Bible shows it clearly that the office of the minister of the Word and the elder are the only offices who have been commanded to govern the church whilst the office of the deacon is mandated with the practical ministry of the church.

1.7.2.2 Comparative Analysis

Lastly a comparative analysis was also applied. In this way a comparison of the Bible and reformed teachings versus the RCZ's church government system, was discussed (Walk, 1998). This methodology research design is used to enhance the confidence in the findings of this research. A review of existing literature was also undertaken. The researcher analysed and compared the relevance of the RCZ's church government from the perspective of the doctrine of church government in the Bible and the Church Order of the Dort (1619). Du Plooy (1998:59) notes that the aim and objective of the church orders which culminated in the church order of Dort 1618/19 were the salvation of believers nothing else. The church orders was prearranged to serve as a channel for the work of the Word and the Spirit through which the believers may carry on to grow in faith, repentance, justification, holiness and perseverance. In the light of the Word of God, church polity/government should regulate the ultimate principles of justice, order and method of government in the church says Du Plooy (1998:194).

1.8 Ethical considerations

It is the sincerest wish and obligation of this researcher to comply and follow all the ethical requirements of the North- West University and that of the department of Higher Education, as far as the literature review and study is concerned. This is supported by what is explained by

Denscombe (2010:337) that researchers do not operate, stand above the law nor put themselves outside the laws of the land. Therefore as a minister of the RCZ, I have tried not violate the Rules and Regulations of the Church either. The risk level of ethical implication here is very low.

In brief, the following were overseen:

- i. To briefly characterise the history of the RCZ's system of church government. The researcher studied all the relevant sources about the RCZ, namely, the literature review, synod minutes, Rules and Regulations, Acts, Church magazines and journals.
- ii. To discuss the doctrine of church government since the beginning of the Reformation. A review of the existing literature concerning the doctrine of church government was studied.
- iii. To have a closer look at some Biblical teaching in the New Testament about church government. The author studied various Bible chapters by means of Biblical exegesis in a hermeneutical manner. Some of the chapters dealt with, were 1 Tim 3:1-13; Acts 6:1-6 and Titus 1:5-9. The review of the relevant literature was undertaken as a way of expounding the subject matter.
- iv. To identify the relevance of the system of church government of the RCZ in comparison to the teachings of the Bible and the practice of church government by the Reformed Churches worldwide. A review of existing literature was done. The researcher spent ample time to evaluate and analyse the relevance of the RCZ's church government system in the perspective of the teachings of the Bible and the Reformed principles.

1.9 Proposed Chapter Outline

This research study tenaciously and topically apportioned to cover all problem statements.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter presents background evidence on the research, which includes: introduction, research rationale, research question and focus, literature review, research objectives, research methodology and approach.

Chapter 2: The historical development and growth of the RCZ

The historical establishment and growth of the RCZ and the outlines of the historical development of the RCZ from a mission field to the autonomous church in Zimbabwe is presented. Also to be discussed in this chapter, is the examination of the RCZ during the eras of the missionaries and the post- missionaries. This chapter is more historical in nature.

Objective: To concisely/briefly characterise the history of the RCZ's system of church government during the era of the missionaries to present time.

Chapter 3: Historical perspective of the doctrine of the Church government

This chapter deals with the evaluation of church government of the RCZ in the light of the theological reflections on the doctrine of the church government. This chapter tested and demonstrated the divergence of the RCZ in church government system to see whether it was still in line with the doctrine of the church government as indicated in the Bible.

Objective: To discuss the doctrine of church government since the start of the Reformation and the Church Order of Dort 1618-1619.

Chapter 4: The Biblical concept of the Doctrine of Church government

This chapter focuses on the Biblical and theological concept of the doctrine of church government. The study in this chapter explains the meaning of the church as it is portrayed in the Bible, i.e., the nature, marks, and principles of the church government according to the Word of God.

Objective: To have a closer look at some Biblical chapters regarding the principles church government.

Chapter 5: The relevance of the RCZ's church government.

This chapter focuses on the comparative analysis of the doctrine of Church government as taught in the New Testament and in other Reformed Churches versus the RCZ's church government system.

Objective: To identify the relevance of the RCZ's system of church government in comparison to the teachings of the Bible and the Reformed Churches worldwide.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

This last chapter focuses on the summary, recommendations and conclusion of the research done.

1.10 Schematic presentation of the research method

Table1-1 Schematic presentation of the research method

A theological evaluation of the government system in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe		
Central Research Question: Are the teachings of RCZ's system of church government relevant to those of the Bible and other Reformed Churches globally?		
1.4 Research Questions	1.5 Objectives	1.7 Research Methodology
1.4.1. What is the historical background of the RCZ regarding church government?	1.5.1. To briefly characterise the history of the RCZ's church government	The researcher consulted all the relevant sources about the RCZ namely, Literature review, Synod minutes, Rules and Regulations, Acts, Minutes, and Church Journals
1.4.2. What is the historical development of the doctrine of the church since its inception of the Church Order of Dort 1618-1619?	1.5.2. To discuss the doctrine of the church since the formulation of Church Order of Dort 1618-1619.	A review of the existing literature of the doctrine of the church with main emphasis on Church government were studied.

1.4.3. What does the Bible teach about the doctrine of church government?	1.5.3. To have a closer look at various Biblical teachings about church government.	The researcher studied various Bible chapters by means of Biblical exegesis in a hermeneutical manner. The review of relevant literature was undertaken as a way of expounding the subject matter.
4.4. What are the merits or shortcomings of the RCZ's church government in comparison to that of the original Reformed teachings?	1.5.4. To identify the relevance of the RCZ's church to the original Reformed teachings according to the Bible.	A review of existing literature was done. The researcher therefore takes time to analyse the relevance of the RCZ's church government in the perspective of the Doctrine of the church.

1.11 Conclusion

The doctrine of church government is explained and discussed comprehensively in Paul's letter to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and also in Titus 1:5-9. The RCZ has different interpretations and understandings of her system of church government. Teachings of the Bible especially in the New Testament should be our yardstick concerning the good governance of the church. The next chapters of this study deals with the history of church government in the RCZ, the doctrine of church government of other Reformed Churches and the Biblical teachings of the New Testament on church government. Subsequently, the study evaluated the system of church government of the RCZ in order to see if it is in line with the teachings of the Reformed customs that have their origin from the reformation started/formulated by Calvin and the Church Order of Dort (1619). The reformed perspective on church government has its origin in the Bible. The aim of this study is to come up with the system of church government which is relevant to that of the Bible and the reformed teachings where Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and He governs it through the office of the minister of the Word and the elders.

CHAPTER 2: THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF THE RCZ

2.1 Introduction

The discussion in the preceding chapter gave the outline of the research background of the whole study.

In this chapter the research assesses the origin, background, development and growth of the RCZ from its inception to the present day. As already noted the study is a theological evaluation of the government system in the RCZ, yet, this chapter gives a historical-descriptive literature review. The research will examine literature on the RCZ to prove the number one objective of the schematic presentation of the research background of this study.

As part of the objective of this study, the key question which this chapter will address, is Objective 1: **What is the historical background of the RCZ regarding church government?** This question will be discussed with a historical perspective because it deals with the origin, development and growth of the RCZ.

The RCZ has to know if it is still adhering to the Reformed church government system, theologically and biblically, with a Reformed/Presbyterian⁷ perspective.

The next section focuses on the coming of the Dutch Reformed Mission to Zimbabwe which led to the establishment of the RCZ.

2.2 The Dutch Reformed Church mission.

The Dutch Reformed Church mission⁸, hereafter referred to as DRCM, came to Zimbabwe (then known as Rhodesia) after the initiation of the DRC Christians in Zoutpansberg under the leadership of Rev Stephanus Hofmeyr who was a missionary in Transvaal, South Africa (Cronje

⁷ Reformed/Presbyterian refers to a type of government structure followed by a church-denomination. RCZ is one of the denominations which believes in such a government.

⁸ The Dutch Reformed Church Mission refers to members of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Cape Synod in the Western Cape of South Africa, who came to Rhodesia (now known as Zimbabwe) to do missionary work.

1982:114). According to Cronje (1982:115) Hofmeyr laboured through the training of evangelists and holding spiritual revivals as a way of stimulating the zeal in members of his congregation to participate in this noble cause of bearing witness among the non-Christians, south of the Limpopo.

“It was under such inspiring vision that he sent Rev S.P Helm, his colleague, and a group of evangelists to Zimbabwe to find out whether there could be a possibility of establishing a permanent settlement in the area for effective mission work among the *Shona* people” (Mutumburanzou 1999:32). Munikwa (2011:82) contends that driven by the love of God the DRC missionaries started to proclaim the Gospel to the Shona people. Through this fact- finding mission, Rev S. P Helm go to more than eighteen congregations in South Africa clarifying the spiritual need of the people in Rhodesia now Zimbabwe. According to Cronje (1982:115), this affected the heart of Andrew Louw who was the son of the DRC minister in the town of Paarl in South Africa. Louw declared himself that he was persuaded of having been called by God to minister among the people of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). This young man was a student at Stellenbosch Theological Seminary now the Faculty of theology but had to pull out in the third year of his studies for the reason that of ill- health. Andrew Louw, with a team of seven evangelists, left Kranspoort in South Africa by ox-wagon on June 18, 1891 and cross over the Limpopo River and arrived Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). It is noted that as they travelled, after crossing the Limpopo River, some of the evangelists were left in different places and villages to start missionary work (Cronje 1982:117). It is recorded that it took them two- and-a-half months of travelling to reach the mountain where Chief Mugabe was living. This was the place where they had been given authorization to start missionary-work among his people. According to Mutumburanzou (1999:35), it was written that soon after their arrival at the top of the mountain where they settled, Andrew Louw became ill because he was afflicted by malaria. The Chief visited him and asked him this question, “Why does your God make you ill?” However, the young man turned his heart to God and said, “Lord I cannot die, I must live for the sake of your

Kingdom” (Mutumburanzou, 1999:35). This was also supported by Houser ⁹(2000:10) who reiterates that A. A. Louw turned his heart to God and said: “Lord I cannot die, I must live for the sake of Thy name and Thy Kingdom”. This proved that Louw was a man who had faith in his God and he had a mission to accomplish.

Because of his faith, God heard his prayers and he recovered from the illness. This also showed that the missionaries had a great commitment and made sacrifices, for even though they faced various difficulties, they never tired of doing well.

2.3 The arrival of the first missionaries in 1891

As stated earlier Andrew Louw with seven evangelists started their missionary journey on 18 June, 1891 and arrived at Chief Mugabe’s mountain on 9 September, 1891. Their journey took two-and a-half months. Andrew Louw was accompanied by seven evangelists namely, Micha Maghato, Joshua Masoha, Lukas Mokoete, Jeremia and Petros Morudu (two brothers), David Molea, and Izak Khumalo (Van der Merwe 1981:62). This is also buttressed by Paas¹⁰ (2006:221) who indicates that Andrew Louw had cooperated with the seven evangelists from the beginning of the DRCM missionary work in Zimbabwe. They contributed a lot to the missionary work because they were the first people who founded the DRCM mission in Zimbabwe.

⁹ Tillman Houser was born in 1922, in the United States. He completed his MA in 1978 at the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological College in Pasadena, California. He worked for seven years as a pastor in the United States. He served for thirty-five years as a missionary for the Free Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. His missionary service includes the following: Management of primary schools, overseeing Church Districts, editing and publishing translations of the Free Methodist Church standard of faith and practice in the Hlengwe (Shangaan) and Shona languages. He founded and planted Churches in urban areas of Zimbabwe from 1971 to 1981.

¹⁰ Rev Dr. Steven Paas (1942) was a lecturer at Zomba Theological College, and a Minister in the *Church of the Central Africa Presbyterian* (CCAP). He graduated at the *University of Amsterdam* (MTh) and at the *Theological University of Apeldorn* (DTh). He worked in Malawi in partnership with the *Gereformeerde Zendings* (Reformed Mission League) in the Netherlands and the Blantyre Synod of the CCAP.

2.3.1 Establishment of mission stations.

Munikwa (2011:82) declares that the DRC missionaries used the mission-station approach. He indicates that this kind of approach was technically known as the comprehensive approach which was based on the preaching of the Gospel combined with education, medicine, agriculture, and industrial activities. In other words, this type of approach is holistic because it is there to address the needs of a whole person, which comprises a spiritual, social, physical, and emotional need.

The first mission station to be founded by missionaries at Chief Mugabe's mountain was named Morgenster which means the "morning- star" or "day- star" (Cronje 1982:118). This is also supported by Munikwa (2011:82) who contends that "Morgenster is the name of the house in which Louw grew up in his hometown, Paarl. According to Cronje (1982:118) it was Andrew Louw's prayer that Morgenster as the first mission station, should be like the " morning- star" foreshadowing the coming of the Son of righteousness into the hearts of the people of Zimbabwe (2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 22:16).

Andrew Louw worked as the head of the mission work at Morgenster for forty-six years. He was the originator/founder of Morgenster mission and also the founder of the RCZ (Baloyi 2008:11). Louw married Cinnie Malan in 1894 and the couple started to learn the Shona language which was the language spoken by the *Vakaranga* people of the Masvingo province (Cronje 1982:118). During their missionary work at Morgenster mission they translated a number of Christian hymns and some scriptural passages into the Shona language. His wife passed on in 1935 and he retired in 1937 but he remained at Morgenster mission until he passed away in 1956 (Cronje 1982: 118).

This was also supported by Zvobgo (1996:4) who holds that the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa under the leadership of A. A. Louw arrived at Mugabe's mountain on the 9 September, 1891 and founded Morgenster mission which was named after Louw's home in Paarl. In 1894 Andrew Louw went to Cape Town where he was examined and ordained. The ordination was conducted at Stellenbosch on 21 March, 1894 by Professor Hofmeyer of the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch (Zvobgo, 1996:4).

The second mission station was established in 1901 known as Pamushana. It was established by Rev.S P.H.A. Fouche and L. du Plessis. This mission station was established 80 kilometres from Morgenster towards the east (Cronje 1982:119; Van der Merwe, 1981:74). This is maintained by Van der Merwe (1981:74) who claims that the second mission station was established in 1901 known as Pamushana (Shona for Sunnyside). He also noted that the founders of this mission station had to leave in 1904 and 1906 respectively because of the ill-- health of their wives. Rev A. C. Jackson was posted at this mission station in 1904 to replace the founders of the mission who had gone back to South Africa because of the condition of their spouses (Van der Merwe 1981:74).

The third mission station named Gutu was taken over from the Berlin Missionary Society who decided to transfer its mission stations to DRCM. Gutu was taken over in 1907 together with the Chibi and Zimuto missions (Cronje 1982:119). This is supported by Munikwa (2011:82) who states that the Berlin Missionary Society of the Lutheran faith tradition founded Gutu in 1892, Chibi in 1897, and Zimuto in 1904, but the German missionaries handed over these mission stations to the DRCM in 1906.

According to Munikwa (2011:83) the handover of Gutu, Chibi, and Zimuto mission stations from the Berlin Missionary Society, displays the cooperation of the DRCM with other churches and missionary societies in the country. Chibi was the fourth mission station while Zimuto was the fifth mission station which were both taken over in 1907. The researcher believes that the government system of the DRCM during their missionary work, were more mission- centred because all the administration was done by missionaries. They controlled everything.

The sixth mission station called Jichidza was started in 1908 by Rev. J. F. Roux in Zaka under Chief Ndanga. According to Van der Merwe (1981:74) this mission station started after the abandonment of the Harawe mission station which was started on a farm bought by the DRCM in 1895. The mission was closed because it was isolated from the people in the surrounding Trust areas. Because of this reason a new mission station was established in 1908 at Jichidza which was a suitable place within reach of all the people in the neighbouring places, according to Van der Merwe (1981:74-75).

Alheit mission station was the seventh mission to be established in 1909. According to Cronje (1982:121) this mission carried the name of the local chief, *Chingombe*, in the beginning, but it was later changed to Alheit in honour of Rev. W. A. Alheit whose congregation, in Ceres, in South Africa had taken a special interest in the establishment of this mission station. Rev H. H. Orlandini came as the first missionary in 1909 (Cronje 1982:121). Van der Merwe (1981:75) states that Rev H. H Orlandini was joined by Jephta Shoko, an evangelist-teacher, in 1910 who had come to assist him. Jephta Shoko was later on posted to Chitsa in 1915; this was the first outpost of the Alheit mission.

An effort to establish a mission station was started in Nyajena in 1909. This is the same area where one of the seven evangelists, Micha Maghato, had been posted in 1891. The station was called Jena under Rev W. J. Combrick. The large area in the neighbourhood of Jena was converted into a farm which allowed the transfer of people to other areas because they had no right to stay there. The mission station was later closed and Rev. W. J. Combrick was reassigned to Zimuto mission (Van der Merwe 1981:76).

The eighth mission station to be established was Makumbe mission station in 1915. According to Van der Merwe (1981:76) Rev. P. A. Badenhorst, who was in charge of Zimuto mission, was moved and sent to the new mission station of Makumbe mission.

Nyashanu mission was established in 1954, forty years later. Van der Merwe (1981:76) argues that Nyashanu mission station was established because the Makumbe mission was serving a large area. The DRC was using the mission station approach as a way of ministering. Munikwa (2011:83) referred to this approach as a comprehensive approach, which addresses the field of the gospel, education, medicine, and agricultural-industrial-work.

All mission stations established by the missionaries of the DRCM, applied these approaches, mentioned in the preceding paragraph, namely, to establish schools, clinics/hospitals, farms, and bookshops. As stated earlier on, Nyashanu was the last mission to be founded by the DRCM, and the RCZ now had established two new missions, known as Nyajena about 50 kilometres from Morgenster, and Tinde mission in Binga.

2.3.2 Other congregations

The DRCM in Zimbabwe also founded congregations in areas such as towns, mines and rural areas. However, most of town congregations and mines congregations were handed over to the DRCM (Cape Synod) by the DRCM Orange Free State¹¹ who were undertaking mission work in Zambia. Munikwa (2011:94) is of the opinion that on 9 July 1954, the mission work and the congregations that had been founded by the DRC (Orange Free State) in Zimbabwe, were transferred to the DRC (Cape Province). The eight congregations established by the DRC (OFS) were: Bulawayo (1941), Chivhu (1944), Gweru (1944), Mutare (1944), Zvishavane (1946), Kadoma (1946), Hwange (1948) and Harare (1952). After the amalgamation of these eight congregations and the eleven congregations of the Shona Reformed Church, the DRCM was able to cover the whole country (Van der Merwe 1981:135).

According to Baloyi (2008:12) the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe has fifty-two congregations in the whole country by then, of which twenty-seven were found in one province: Masvingo province. The Binga Mission congregation¹² was established as the product of evangelism which was done in that area in 1996-1997. It was established as an independent Congregation from the Hwange congregation on 8 February 2008. This congregation was established among the Tonga-speaking people of Matabeleland North province.

However, here the researcher is trying to indicate that when a congregation is formed, it should be clear that members of the respective constituency or preaching post are of one mind, and that the necessary leadership exists. There should be 300 full members, of whom at least 200 partake of the Holy Communion (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:13-14).

¹¹ DRCM Orange Free State refers to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission of the Orange Free State Synod in South Africa which was doing missionary work in Zambia. They followed some Zambians who were working in mines in Zimbabwe and established various congregations. They later on transferred those congregations to the DRCM Cape Synod which was doing missionary work in Zimbabwe. That is why the RCZ does not have mission stations in towns.

¹² Binga mission congregation is the product of the Church's national week of evangelism which is carried out by the RCZ for a week in August each year. The RCZ embarks on a national evangelism week for one week in August. This was done for two years in 1996 and 1997. A number of local people gave their life to Christ and they were nurtured by the Hwange congregation until they were demarcated on 8th February 2008 to form their own congregation.

The RCZ has congregations spread all over the country with some now being established outside the country to cater for those people who have crossed the borders of the country because of the economic melt-down and the political situation which drove many people into hiding because of their political affiliation. This did not spare members of the RCZ.

The establishment of the Congregation system by the missionaries of the DRCM also led to the establishment of government system in the administration of the congregations.

2.4 The establishment of the governing assemblies/councils

For one to discuss the government system of the RCZ, it is prudent to give an explanation about the establishment of the Church council, Presbytery and the Synod of the RCZ. This is so because when the missionaries came to do mission work in Zimbabwe they did not use the council system but they were using a mission- board type of administration. In his dissertation, Rutoro¹³ (2007:90) did research on “Lay leadership development in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe”. Rutoro (2007:91) indicated that since the commencement of the mission work in Zimbabwe, supervision of what was taking place was done by means of correspondence from the Mission office in Cape Town. The founder of the mission work in Zimbabwe, Rev A. A. Louw, who acted as the spokesperson, however, provoked them to think twice regarding the expansion of the work. Because of this, the constitution of the mission council was established on 18 April 1905. It was supervised by the mission secretary (Rutoro 2007:91).

¹³ Rutoro Rangarirai did his doctoral studies at Stellenbosch University in South Africa He majored in Practical Theology, researching all about: “Lay- leadership development in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe”. The researcher believes that he did a wonderful job in this and consequently there is a need to do a theological evaluation of the government system in the RCZ. Rutoro is the sitting moderator of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. A lot of his work will be consulted in this chapter.

2.4.1 Church Council/Council of Elders

The first DRC congregation to be established was Morgenster Mission in 1891. It took about twenty-six years before the establishment of the council of congregations. This is so because in 1917 the mission approved to establish congregations at all mission stations (provided there were at least fifty members who partook of the Holy Communion). During this same meeting the rules and regulations of the church council of congregations known as “*Rangano Doko*¹⁴” in *shona* were laid down (Van der Merwe 1981:79).

Rutoro (2007:93) stresses that the idea of establishing a council of congregations and an establishment of congregations, took three years before being implemented because the number of members required to constitute a congregation, was 300 members. However, in 1920 the Mission Council lowered the number to 50 members who partook of the Holy Communion. Because of these, congregations were established in mission stations. The following regulations were formulated, laid down and adopted for use by the local church council or congregation:

- That it should comprise of a local male missionary and one or more elders subject on the needs of the congregation.
- The elders should be nominated only by and from older male church members of the congregation who are married.
- The duty of the Church council was to be alike to those of the “mother Church”, but revised to suit local conditions.
- Church Council was to meet quarterly or as often as necessary (Van der Merwe, 1981:79; Rutoro 2007:93-94).

¹⁴ *Rangano Doko* refers to the local church council or consistory.

This was the beginning of the establishment of the government system in the RCZ at congregational level. The above regulations were revised many times and at present many amendments were made (as indicated below).

2.4.1.1 Constitution of the Church Council

Each congregation is controlled by a church council consisting of:

- Its ordained minister (or his/her legal representatives).
- Elders and deacons/deaconesses.
- All the ministers serving in the Church departments in a particular congregation are also members of the Church Council but have no voting rights.
- Evangelists, lay preachers and youth counsellors are also members of the church council but have no voting rights.
- The above- mentioned officials will discharge their official duties in accordance with the provisions of the RCZ.
- Church Council Executive ,consisting of:
 - Ordained Minister(s)
 - Secretary
 - Vice -Secretary
 - Central deacon/deaconess.
 - The executive members are the signatories of the congregation's accounts (RCZ *BhukuyoMurairo*, 2010:5; 2017:21).

All the office-bearers in the Church Council such as the minister, elder, deacon/deaconess, and evangelist and youth counsellor have his/her responsibility as a way of complementing one another in edifying the congregation. The job description of each office-bearer will be discussed in detail later on in the next chapters.

Mutumburanzou (1999:52) recalls that in the same way as that in which the Church Council was constituted, the Mission Council also instituted a council of congregations called *Rangano Huru*¹⁵ (Presbytery) to act as the co-ordinating governing body with more power than the Church Council.

2.4.2 Presbytery/Council of Congregations

As was done in the constitution of the Church Council, the Mission Council also formulated and put down the rules and regulations for the Council of congregations, which were listed as follows:

- It should be made up of of a male missionary who is in control of a mission station or minister of the congregation and a male elder for each congregation.
- It should meet two days before the meeting of the Mission Council, which was the highest body at the same venue.
- It had to discuss issues such as pastoral work in the church and report on the work in the congregations, church discipline and other issues relating to the life of the church.
- It had to meet once a year to elect its own chairman and secretary (Mutumburanzou 1999:52; Rutoro 2007:94).

¹⁵ *Rangano Huru* is a Shona word which can be translated to mean Presbytery or Classis. It is a higher board to the Church Council which may also be referred to as *Rangano Doko*, meaning (in *Shona*) that the Church Council is smaller and reports to the Presbytery.

The Presbytery started to function in 1918 and it had legislative powers and the supervisory task over the church council. This was so because the entire congregations formed one presbytery so there was no synod. Because of this scenario, the Presbytery reported to the Mission Council and the Mission Board (Mutumburanzou 1999:52).

Evangelists and lay preachers were allowed to attend Presbytery meetings as observers and as non- voting members of both the Church council and the Presbytery. The rule still stands even today although now there can be voted for one position only, viz. that of the Youth Coordinator (Synod Minutes, (2012:98/9).

White ministers were the only ministers who held positions in the Presbytery Executive committee since the establishment of the Presbytery between 1918 and 1952. Rutoro (2007:95) states that from 1918 to 1925 Rev. A. A. Louw was the chairman of both the Mission Council and the Presbytery. There was domination by the white male clerics over the counterparts because they had remained in a broader leadership position for 46 years from 1891 to 1937 (Rutoro 2007:95).

The indigenous ministers, though they were able to take up positions of leadership, were considered unable to hold such positions in decision- making boards. However, the rules and regulations of the Presbytery have been revised drastically as constituted in the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* of the RCZ published in 2010 and in 2017.

2.4.2.1 Constitution of the Presbyteries

Presbyteries of the RCZ are constituted by:

- All serving ordained ministers of the Word who belong to the congregations of the particular presbyteries of the RCZ

- One delegated elder or deacon/deaconess or former elder or deacon/deaconess from each of the congregations belonging to the relevant presbyteries.
- All ministers serving in the church departments, yet such ministers have no voting rights but can be voted for.
- Evangelists, Lay preachers, and Youth counsellors are also members of the Presbytery on the other hand have no voting rights. They can be voted for in the post of the Youth Coordinator within their Presbytery.
- Presbyteries are formed or established by the Synod or the Synodical Committee at its session.
- Presbyteries assemble annually at a place determined by the presbytery executive.
- **Presbytery Executive.**
 - Chairperson- Ordained Minister
 - Vice Chairperson-Ordained Minister
 - Secretary- Elder
 - Vice Secretary- Elder
 - Treasurer- Elder
 - Actuary- Ordained Minister
 - Youth Co-ordinator- Minister/Evangelist/Youth Counsellor.
 - The signatories to the Presbytery bank accounts are: Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer.
 - The Executive shall be elected every two years (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2010:6-7).

This is an indication that there is a great change in the Constitution of Office-bearers of the Presbytery Executive because during the administration of the missionaries only the clergy were elected. The composition of office-bearers in the RCZ today is of both the clergy and the elders.

As noted earlier regarding the Presbytery that started to function in 1918: it took thirty-four years to have the Synod established in the DRCM. This was seen against the background where most congregations resorting under mission stations were under the control of the white missionaries who were using the system of mission councils to run these institutions.

2.4.3 Formation of the Synod.

The issue about the establishment of the Synod was discussed at the Presbytery meeting held in 1950. This led to the establishment of a committee to do fact-finding about the constitution of the Synod:

In 1950 elder C. A. Napata, representative of the congregation of Morgenster, moved a motion at the Rangano Huru that the formation of an independent synod should be considered. The Rangano Huru approved the motion in principle and a committee, consisting of S.K. Jackson, A. Makombe, W.J. van der Merwe and C.A. Napata, was appointed to investigate the matter. In 1951 this committee presented its report. The Rangano Huru then decided that a synod be constituted in May or September 1952. The Rangano Huru also approved that the congregations which had been established in the urban areas in Zimbabwe where the DRC. (O.F.S) was engaged in mission work, be included in the synod, if they so desired, and that a synod would be constituted even if the above-mentioned congregations in urban areas should decide against inclusion. In addition, the Rangano Huru decided that its constituent congregations should contain the presbyteries of Morgenster and Gutu. In 1952 it was resolved that the synod should be constituted on 9 September of the same year, that is, exactly 61 years after the missionary party of A. A. Louw had arrived at Mugabe's Mountain, and that the young Church which was about to constitute its own Synod, be designated the Shona Reformed Church (Kereke Reformed yavaShona) (Van der Merwe 1981:123-124).

The synod of the young Shona Reformed Church which was established in 1952 started with only two Presbyteries as mentioned in the church magazine (*Munyai WaShe*, August 2000:18). This was an autonomous and independent governing board which was now in effect under its own principles rather than having to report to the Mission council as was the case with the Presbytery. Rev E. N. Ngara¹⁶ who was the first African moderator of the RCZ in 1961. This was

¹⁶ Rev Edward Ngavaite Ngara was the first African minister to be the moderator of the Shona Reformed Church, and he was elected in the Moderamen at the second Synodical meeting in 1954. He was the one who spoke on behalf of the Shona Reformed Church at the inauguration of the Synod.

a major development in the history of the RCZ because it showed that the time was ripe for the church to be administered, run, and controlled by local leadership (Mutumburanzou, 1999:53; Baloyi, 2008:13).

In the constitution of the Synod of the Shona Reformed Church it was stipulated that:

In accordance with the policy of self-support which had been pursued by the DRC. (Cape), it was specified in the Constitution: "The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa is responsible for the salaries of the European ministers in the services of the Shona Reformed Church.....The Shona Reformed Church is responsible for the maintenance of Africans in the service of the Church. When the final draft of the constitution was approved by the mother- and daughter- churches, E. N. Ngara, the most senior African minister in full-time service, spoke on behalf of the Shona Reformed Church as follows: "We desire inner growth...We want a spiritual church which has the Spirit of Christ. Only such a church can be holy and will be received by the Bridegroom, Jesus.... Go and tell the mother- church that we thank her because she has brought this gospel with so much love.... Some of your children whom you sent here, have died here, but that did not stop you from sending more, and so we see that many of them are present here today" (Van der Merwe 1981:124-125).

These were the thoughtful words full of wisdom and gratitude from one who was standing on behalf of the young self-governing church to give a vote of thanks to the mother church for allowing the local people to run the affairs of the church on a daily basis.

The mission of the DRC (O.F.S) successfully reassigned all congregations to the DRC (Cape) in July 1954, and in 1956 at a Synodical meeting, it was reported that all urban congregations of the DRC (O.F.S) had decided to affiliate with the Synod of the Shona Reformed Church. The following congregations were welcomed at that Synodical meeting: Salisbury now Harare, Wankie (Hwange), Gatooma (Kadoma), and Gwelo (Gweru) (van der Merwe, 1981:125). This was echoed by Munikwa who said:

- There are a number of important events that reshaped and changed the identity of the Church. On 9 July 1954, the mission work and the congregations that the DRC (O.F.S) had founded in Zimbabwe, were transferred to the DRCM and it was able to cover the whole country (van der Merwe 1981:135). The eight congregations that the DRC. (O.F.S) had established were Bulawayo (1941), Chivhu (1944), Gweru (1944), Mutare (1944),

Zvishavane (1946), Kadoma (1946), Hwange (1948) and Harare (1952). In 1956, they decided to amalgamate with the Synod of the Shona Reformed Church that had eleven congregations. The researcher notes that the agreement between the DRC Cape Synod and DRC Orange Free State reflects the importance of cooperation and intercultural mission. When churches unite in mission they do much better and do not waste resources (Munikwa, 2011:94).

The name Shona Reformed Church was transformed to the African Reformed Church to accommodate the Chewa- speaking congregants in the above- mentioned urban congregations. Mutumburanzou (1999:53) and Munikwa (2011:94) note that, because of the new ethnic diversity, the name had to be changed. Another milestone achieved, was the handing over of the church to the black people. A committee was chosen in 1976 to draw up a new Deed of Agreement to replace the one which had been drafted in 1966, and in 1977, on 4 May the new Deed of Agreement was signed. This meant that all the DRCM's mission work and properties were officially handed over to the self-ruling Church, the ARC¹⁷ (Van der Merwe 1981:191; Cronje 1982:132; Mutumburanzou 1999:131; Rutoro, 2007:106, and Munikwa 2011:94). The Church held its centenary celebration in September 1991 to mark its one hundred years of existence in Zimbabwe since its founding in 1891 (*Munyai WaShe*¹⁸, October 1991:5). This occasion was graced by the former president of the Republic of Zimbabwe his Excellency Robert Gabriel Mugabe and many Church dignitaries from Southern Africa and from overseas.

¹⁷ ARC is an abbreviation of the African Reformed Church -- the name given to The Shona Reformed Church after its amalgamation with the congregations transferred from the DRC Orange Free State. Members of these congregations were Chewa- speaking people. It was a noble idea to show respect to the members of these congregations to change the name from Shona Reformed Church to African Reformed Church which is inclusive. By renaming it "African" also shows that the Church was now under the leadership of indigenous people. The Chewa- speaking congregations had formerly been under the Reformed Church in Zambia which had been founded by the Dutch Reformed Church of the Orange Free State of South Africa. They established congregations in Zimbabwe because they were pasturing to people who had migrated from Zambia to Zimbabwe to work in mines and on farms, where others were working and some are still working in towns here in Zimbabwe. The African Reformed Church is hereafter referred to as ARC.

¹⁸ *Munyai WaShe* refers to the RCZ Church magazine which is translated to mean, "The messenger of Christ" which was published at Morgenster Mission Printing Press but at present, the Church is no longer publishing it because of economic hardship.

The missionaries of the DRCM were using different ways of spreading the gospel among the Shona people. Baloyi (2008:13) notes that they were using evangelism, education, medical and Bible tracks as a way of spreading the gospel to the intended believers. These methods of spreading the gospel will be explained later in this chapter after analysing the composition of the Synod, Synodical Committee and the Synod Executive.

2.4.3.1 Constitution of the Synod of the RCZ

The Synod of the RCZ is the Supreme body of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe which is instituted by:

- All the serving ordained ministers of all congregations which belong to the RCZ in terms of Section 2¹⁹ of the RCZ Church Constitution.
- One delegated elder or deacon/deaconess from every established congregation.
- Ordained ministers engaged in other official church posts would have no right to vote, but can be voted for.
- It assembles every two years.
- When the Synod is not in session its will be conducted by the Synodical Committee

The Synodical Committee shall consist of:

¹⁹ Section 2 of the Constitution of the RCZ says, "The Reformed Church in Zimbabwe shall consist of all the Congregations in Zimbabwe, and outside the country which have been founded or ceded to the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, and which have been handed over by that Church to the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe; also of other congregations founded by the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe in and outside Zimbabwe as well as other congregations transferred from other denominations which may be joined synodically with the RCZ after the approval of the Synod of this Church".

- The Moderamen/Moderature²⁰ which is the Synodical Committee Executive.

- Each Presbytery is represented by one elder and one minister or their alternative delegates.

- At the Synod meeting the Synod Executive which is called the Moderamen/Moderature shall be elected which has the following office-bearers:
 - Moderator (Minister)
 - Vice Moderator (Minister)
 - Scribe/Secretary (Elder)
 - Vice Scribe/ Vice Secretary (Elder)
 - Actuary (Minister)
 - General Secretary (Ex officio) Minister
 - Vice General Secretary (Ex officio) Minister
 - Treasurer (Ex officio) or Assistant Treasurer

- Those elected in the Synod Executive should have served the Church for more than two years and have attended more than one Synod meeting. These are eligible for re-election for a limited term of office depending on the post because they vary (*Bhuku yoMurairo* 2010:7-8; Synod Minutes 2016:97/56; RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:16). After the expiry of their term they have to leave the office for one term. If the Synod considers them to be competent they can be re-elected back into office after resting for at least one term as it is stipulated in the Synod Minutes (2016:97/56). This supersedes or take the place of what is stated in the *Bhuku yoMurairo* edition of 2010.

²⁰Moderamen refers to the Synod Executive which is composed of male leaders only while the Moderature refers to the Synod Executive which includes females. Since the RCZ attained its autonomy in 1952 the Synod Executive was dominated by male leaders. The duties of the Moderamen/Moderature (hereafter the researcher will prefer to use the word "Moderature" because of its inclusivity), is to implement the decisions of the Synodical Committee. All congregations that are outside the country of (Zimbabwe) and in Zimbabwe, are supervised by their respective presbyteries. The term Moderamen was changed in 2010 (Synod Minutes, 2010:6)

2.4.3.2 Roles of the Synod

The meetings of the Synod are determined by the Synodical Committee or the Synod Executive. They plan the time and the venue of the meetings from time to time. The Synod assembles every two years, but if there are pressing issues, the Synodical Committee is obliged to call for an emergency Synod meeting (*Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:16). The RCZ Synod receives reports from its Committees, it authorises the use of the Church Logo and it is the highest disciplinary board of the Church. In other words, the Synod receives issues for deliberations from its lower boards such as the Church Council, Presbytery and the Synodical Committees. The system of Church government should be from the lower board to the highest board.

2.4.3.3 Legislative power of the Synod

The Synod of the RCZ is the top decision-making body. It is authorised to make, amend and repeal laws and provisions of its own management. The laws and provisions of the church leagues are to be made or formulated in conformity with the Constitution of the RCZ. The Synod has the power to receive congregations of other denominations if they agree to be bound by the Constitution of the RCZ. According to RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:16) it stated that the exclusive right to amend or repeal the Constitution of the RCZ is vested in the Synod at its sitting.

The researcher believes that it is prudent to discuss the responsibilities of the members of the Moderature/Moderamen because this research is evaluating the government system of the RCZ. Rutoro (2007:113) holds that from the period of 1952 the composition of the Moderamen was solely a male minister's domain. The composition was reorganized from 1986 as follows; Moderator (Minister), Vice-Moderator (Minister), Actuary (Minister), Synod Secretary (elder), and Vice Synod Secretary (elder), ex-officio members: General Secretary (Minister), Treasurer (elder) (Synod Minutes, 1986:776/46; Rutoro 2007:114). The researcher is against the issue of referring the office of the Treasurer as the office of an elder because the office-bearer is an employee for the Church.

Before the restructuring of the Moderamen, the committee had the following offices, Moderator, Assessor (Vice Moderator), Scribe (Secretary) and the Actuary (Cf. Synod Minutes 1972:3; 1975:96 &1981:413). During this period all offices in the Moderamen were occupied by ministers of the Word. However, there is a great change now because the offices have increased from four to eight as mentioned by Rutoro (2007:114). The duties of these office-bearers are discussed below.

2.4.3.3.1 General Secretary

The office of the General Secretary's post was initiated by the discussion of the hand-over of the full church leadership to the African Reformed Church. The nomination of the General Secretary, the superintendent of the Church was put into effect at a Synod meeting which was held in Bulawayo in 1975 (Rutoro 2007:106). From 1952 to 1975 only white missionaries were voted this position.

Rev R.C. Maunganidze was the first local minister to be elected to the post of the General Secretary. Some of the ministers of the Word who have worked in this post to the present-day are: Rev CJ Chikasha, Rev HC Chaputsira, Rev RC Maunganidze (re-elected), Rev P Mahere, Rev JJ Zingoni (re-elected), Rev A Mandebvu, Rev C Munikwa (Rutoro 2007:107), and Rev C Juro ,who was elected at the August 2012 Synod (Synod Minutes 2012:6), & Rev T Masimba (Synod Minutes, 2018:7).

The General Secretary is elected into office by the Synod or the Synodical Committee at its session. The term of office for the General Secretary is six years and afterwards it can be renewed for another term of two years. The General Secretary is ex-officio of all Church Committees. Rutoro (2007:106) states that the General Secretary occupies and controls the day-to-day administration of the Church. The typing and translation of minutes from the vernacular language is the responsibility of the office of the General Secretary.

The office of the General Secretary, works hand- in- hand with the Church treasurer by making sure that all Church accounts are audited regularly. All implementation of the Synod deliberations during its session is supervised by the General Secretary's office in conjunction with responsible Church committees. Workshops and committee meetings are organised through the office of the General Secretary. All correspondences to congregations, presbytery, church departments, government, and other institutions and even outside the country are authored and posted from the office of the General Secretary (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:16-17).

The researcher believes that this office- bearer can be referred to as the administrator or the Chief Executive Officer of the RCZ. The research has proved that the General Secretary is the connecting link/liaison officer of the whole Church with the government and outside partners, like Church departments; therefore everything that comes in or goes out of the Church has to pass through the desk of the General Secretary. This is the connecting link of the Church on a daily basis.

Another major responsibility of the General Secretary is that in consultation with the Moderator he speaks on behalf of the Church if there is need to do so. According to RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:40) the office of the General Secretary has the obligation to look out for expatriate workers such as doctors, missionaries and other workers with expertise from other countries and our sister churches in South Africa and the Netherlands. It is the duty of the office of the General Secretary to apply for the immigration documents such as work-permits of all expatriates working for the Church, together with their families, who will be staying with them later.

The General Secretary must be an ordained minister who has been working from a congregation or any other church department for at least three years or more. The person must be fluent in the English language with good public relations because he/she works with people from different backgrounds (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:39-40). When elected into office the bearer is encouraged to undergo short courses on administration. If the General Secretary is not in office because of other assignments as delegated by the Church, the Vice General Secretary will come

in to take the responsibilities and duties to be done by the General Secretary. *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:40) states that the General Secretary is the signatory of all church accounts and is a member of the Board of Trustees of the RCZ. As noted earlier the General Secretary works in consultation with the moderator who is the chairperson of the Synod, Synodical committee, and Moderature, so therefore the research now focuses upon the office of the moderator. The General Secretary is relieved by the vice General Secretary if he/she is not on duty (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2010:54; 2017:37).

2.4.3.3.2 The Moderator's post

The Moderator is the presiding officer of the Church during his/her term of office. The term of office for the moderator is four years, uncontested, and at the expiry of four years, the bearer can be elected for another term of two years (*Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:39). During his/her term of office the moderator is the chairperson of the Synod, Synodical committee, Moderature, Board of Trustees and the Chancellor of the Reformed Church University (RCU)²¹.

The office of the moderator obtains reports from all Church committees through the office of the General Secretary. More so, the moderator with the Synodical Committee must see to it that all Church accounts have been audited on a yearly basis. As in the rules and regulations of the RCZ the moderator gives the report to the Synod on behalf of the Synodical committee during the Synod session which is held bi-annually (*Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:39).

The moderator, by being the chairperson during his/her term of office is delegated to represent the Church at all national and international conferences, yet, the Synodical committee has the power to appoint any other person to represent the Church at these conferences. If time permits

²¹ RCU is the abbreviation of the Reformed Church University which was founded and is whole funded by the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The sitting moderator is the Chancellor of this University. It was resolved at the Synod that sat in August 2010 and agreed that the elected sitting moderator automatically becomes the Chancellor of the Reformed Church University for a term of four years (Synod Minutes, 2010; Synod Minutes, 2012:117/37).

with his/her office schedule, he/she can occasionally visit congregations and presbyteries. During the absence of the moderator the vice moderator takes over the responsibilities and duties of the moderator (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2010:53; RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:39).

Likewise the moderator and the general secretary work hand- in- hand with the treasury department of the Church which is headed by the Church Treasurer²². This is so since in the preceding paragraphs, research has indicated that the general secretary, the moderator with the Synodical Committee, must see that all Church accounts are audited on a yearly basis. Therefore, consideration is now given to the office of the Treasurer. If the Moderator is not in office the vice Moderator shall act.

2.4.3.3.3 Church Treasurer

The treasurer of the Church was not a member of the Moderamen of the RCZ until 1998 when he was co-opted as an executive member of the committee (Synod Minutes, 1998:30). The Church treasurer is the custodian of all church resources. Munikwa (2011:120) explains the post of the treasurer as follows:

The treasurer is the financial director of the Church and is a member of the Moderature. The treasurer works with the Finance Committee that has the responsibility to control the finances of the Church and advise the Synod, or Synodical Committee, on the course to be followed. The Church established a centralised system in financial management in all her departments. This has brought the spirit of joint responsibility to most congregations. The RCZ created an internal audit department headed by the Chief Internal Auditor responsible for implementing the audit systems of the organisation. The officer works with an Audit Committee”.

Another responsibility of the treasurer is to plan the budget for the Church with the help of the Finance Committee. The treasurer is the countersigner or signatory of all Church accounts and must make sure that all Church accounts are audited year after year by the internal audit (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2010:100; Baloyi, 2016:38).

²² The RCZ treasurer's duties are to safeguard the resources of the Church at large and to prepare the Budget for the Church. The Treasurer works hand- in- hand with the congregations' treasurers who are normally referred to, in the RCZ, as central deacons who also, on their level represent the congregation in all matters which have to do with finances or resources of the congregation.

The Treasurer occasionally holds workshop, and planning meetings with central deacons/deaconesses or congregation treasurers as a way of encouraging them. These meetings are held on a four times a year basis. He/She is the one responsible for presenting budget proposals to the central deacons at the beginning of each year (*Central Deacons' Minutes* 2011:5/5). The Treasurer is also instructed to review the budget upwards or downwards with the authority of the Finance Committee when it receives the endorsement from the Synodical Committee or the Synod (*Central Deacons' Minutes* 2010:11/3).

The Treasurer as the head of the Finance department in the Church, spontaneously becomes the member of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is made up of the Moderator, Synod Secretary, General Secretary, and the Actuary. This Board has the authority to buy, sell, let or hire property and exchange, transfer, or receive funds by way of donations or otherwise (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2010:99).

The Treasurer, on behalf of the Church, superintends the financial administration of all departments. If the Treasurer is on leave or out- of -office because of other commitments, the assistant treasurer will be responsible for the duties of the Treasurer. This position is occupied by a lay person who is a professional in accounting. The Treasurer reports to the Synodical Finance Committee, which is appointed by the Synod when it is in session *RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:18).

The Finance Committee will be made up of knowledgeable, highly- qualified and successful people in the field of accounting (*Munyai WaShe* 2010: 01/19). However, in previous years the office of the treasurer was not part of the Synodical committee or the Moderamen as is stipulated in the *RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* (1967:11; 1976:27; Synod Minutes 1981:413)²³. The assumption of the researcher is that; 1) finances of the church were taken care of by missionaries who were seconded by the mother church, 2) the treasurer was not part of the Moderamen because of being

²³ Cf. 2.4.3.3. Legislative power of the Synod. This where the Synod of 1986 restructured the composition of the Moderamen. This however, will not answer the question of the legality of the office not delegated to the Synod by the Church council can participated in church government issues.

an employee of the church. The office-bearer is in that office not because of being an elder or a deacon but is there based on professionalism. The issue of this office on being part of broader assemblies shall be evaluated in Chapter 5. Treasurer shall be relieved his or her duties by the Vice treasurer.

2.4.3.3.4 Actuary's post

The Actuary is a member of the Board of Governors for the Theological College, Doctrinal and Research Committee, Synodical Committee, Moderature and the Board of Trustees. The Actuary must be an ordained minister. The Church introduced this post because it safeguards the well-being, the identity and the doctrinal standard of the RCZ.

The Actuary oversees the licensing and ordination of Candidate ministers who have graduated from the Theological College. *RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo (2017:40)* states that he/she is the one who gives Ordination certificates to the newly- ordained ministers in the RCZ. The person who holds such a post is compelled by the Church to be well- versed in the Supreme constitution of the country, and the Rules and Regulations of the RCZ. This will help him/her when there are any labour disputes in which instances the Church may be taken to Judicial Courts by its employees (*Bhuku yoMurairo 2017:40*)

The researcher believes that the Actuary administers the work of RCZ's system of government by working with all the committees in the Church. As a member of the Doctrinal and Research Committee, the Actuary is obligated to give reports on behalf of the latter Committee to the Synod when it is in session; if he/she is absent the Chairperson of the Committee gives the report. He/she is responsible for the safe- keeping of all minutes and documents of the Church; the Actuary must make sure that the policies of calling of ministers in congregations, departments and delimitations of congregations and presbyteries, are not violated. The Actuary is the custodian of the church's rules and regulations.

Regarding amendments and repealing made by the Synod in the RCZ's Rules and Regulations, it is the duty of the office of the Actuary and the Doctrinal research committee to see to it that the congregations and all Church departments are informed about all the additions, and revision of the Church Constitution in time. The Actuary oversees and checks that all decisions and recommendations made by the Synodical Administration Board and Synodical Committee, and Synod are implemented in time without delay (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:40).

2.4.3.3.5 The Scribe

The Scribe is another member of the Moderature together with his/her vice scribe. These two are lay- persons; therefore, in the Moderature there are three posts for lay- people in addition to five posts which are occupied by ministers. This has been discussed in 2.4.3.1 concerning the Constitution of the Synod of the RCZ where the composition of the Synod Executive was mentioned, hereafter referred to as the Moderature.

Another term used in reference to the Scribe in the RCZ is the Synod Secretary. By being a member of the Moderature the latter by design becomes a member of the Synodical Committee and sits on the Board of Trustees (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2010:99). The responsibility of the Scribe is to take minutes of the proceedings of meetings in all boards where he/she is member. He/she does this in consultation with the office of the General Secretary who is the administrator of the Church, as explained in 2.4.3.4.

The researcher believes the system of the Church government of the RCZ is not a one-man job but that people must share responsibilities. The composition of the Moderature has shown that the clergy was and is still controlling the broader leadership positions in the Moderature and that male leadership still controls all leadership system even though the Church has got female leaders such as ministers, elders, and deaconesses.

After discussing the responsibilities of the Moderature the attention now is given to other forms which were used by missionaries as a means of spreading the gospel in the country. The methods which were used by missionaries were evangelism, education, medical work, training of ministers, Christian literature and Bible translation, and Christian ministries broadcast over the radio. The post has also the post of the vice secretary to replace the later if is not present or available for the meeting.

2.5 MISSIONARY METHODS AND APPROACHES

As noted earlier that the missionaries who came to Zimbabwe used various methods and approaches in spreading the Gospel namely, evangelism, education, health care, education, and literature translation.

2.5.1 Evangelism

Evangelism is the core business of the Church. Coris (1984:55) defines evangelism as follows: “Evangelism is communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ with the immediate intent of converting the hearer to faith in Christ, and with the ultimate intent of instructing the convert in the Word of God so that he/she can become a mature believer”.

The DRCM used the strategy of establishing outposts or preaching centres in rural areas and these posts were established or founded by those seven evangelists. The history of the DRCM proved that these outposts up to the present day contain the majority membership of the RCZ. Van der Merwe (1981:74) argued that most influential, devoted and committed members of the RCZ come from these outposts which were established by the seven evangelists. Some of these outposts later became the headquarters now referred to as *Rangano Huru* (Presbyteries) of the local churches. God used these evangelists to spread the Word of God to the hearts of many Shona people. The evangelists were used by God as vessels to carry His divine message towards all the outposts as seen in the case of one of these evangelists called David Molea who laboured tirelessly in Morgenster (the first mission station to be founded by the DRCM). The first

converts namely, *Mutizwa* and *Muzeza* who were baptised on 16 September 1896 with the new Christian names of *Joseph* and *Matthew*. The first woman to be converted to Christ after receiving some instruction in the Bible had to confess as follows: “My heart is full of joy, because I have surrendered it to Jesus”. “But how do you know that He has accepted you?” She was asked. She answered, “He promised this, when he said, give me your heart; and this I did”. “Therefore I am sure that He accepted me”. She was asked again: “And what about your sins?” “The Lord placed my sins on Jesus Christ and He has forgiven me all my sins when I asked him in prayer to do so”, she answered (Cronje 1982:122).

Evangelism did not cease or end with the seven evangelists because the establishment of outposts led to the birth of the Church known as the DRCM among the Shona people. Many people were converted to Christ and became members of the Church. Besides the evangelists, there were white missionaries who were in charge of all mission stations and supervising the evangelists who were posted in rural outposts. The membership of the Church continued to grow, so much so that the wife of the founder of DRCM, A. A Louw, decided to form a league which was specifically meant to cater for women in the Church known as *Sungano yaMadzimai* (Women’s League). This later on led to the establishment of *Sungano yaVarume* (Men’s League), *Chiedza Chenyika* (Light of the World) and the Youth ministry, *Varwi Vokunyengerera* (Prayer Warriors/Intercessors). All the leagues or associations played a major part and are still playing a big role in the spreading of the Gospel. Evangelism has taken the centre stage as a vehicle of reaching out to non-believers through these leagues (Van der Merwe 1981:84; Munikwa 2010:23).

2.5.2 The Women’s League

The association of women called *Sungano yaMadzimai* was founded in 1923 under the leadership of Mrs A.A. Louw. In 1931 Miss Joubert founded the school for the wives of evangelists and African teachers at Morgenster mission (Van der Merwe, 1981:97). The main objective of this training school was to teach and prepare the wives of these African workers in

the vineyard of God to be in a position to support their husbands in the ministry and also to be able to help their fellow- women. *Sungano yaMadzimai's* main objectives was to take evangelism to all corners of the country through preaching the word of God to all people, to visit the sick, the backsliders and the bereaved, as a way of comforting them to show that they did not want to lose a single soul that had previously converted to the Lord (Van der Merwe, 1981:97).

2.5.3 The Men's League

In 1946, *Sungano yaVarume* was started to cater for all married men who converted to become members of the DRCM. The main objectives of this association/league were to preach the gospel through evangelism in both rural and urban areas and to encourage people to attend church services. Likewise, *Sungano yaVarume* was obliged to pay pastoral visits to the backsliders, to lead Sunday services, to teach Sunday school and Catechumen classes. The objective of this league was to take evangelism as its core business. In 1947, the *Rangano Huru*, which was in charge of all congregations by then, determined at its meeting that this association had to be established in all congregations because of its evangelical methods being such an effective means of spreading the gospel to both believers and non-believers (Mutumburanzou, 1999:59).

2.5.4 Chiedza Chenyika

As explained earlier, that *Chiedza Chenyika* is a *Shona* word meaning, "The light of the World" denoting to Youth Ministry composed only of boys and girls. After the birth of the RCZ, the evangelists continued to address the needs of the youth in the church as a way of evangelising. Various activities such as games, choirs, drama and Bible quizzes were taught to the youth as a way of keeping them close to God. The youth ministry's main purposes were that together with the confession of sins, every teaching was to be centred on Christ and giving testimony about what God had done in their lives (Mutumburanzou 1999:60). The youth reinvigorated one another to bear witness about Christ wherever they were, having constant prayers and

intercession in groups or as individuals. Their conferences were well- attended which led to the introduction of renewals/revivals and crusades in most congregations. The objective of Chiedza Chenyika was for the youth to know more about Christ and to testify and bear witness of Him to other boys and girls of their age who were not Christians. This was another way of encouraging the youth of the same belief in Christ, to marry one another as it is written in Paul's letter to the Corinthians (2: 6:14). Mutumburanzou (1999:60) argues that this was a strong evangelical skill used among the youth to win them for Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

2.5.5 The Varwi Movement

The Varwi movement was started in 1936. This League was known as *Varwi VaKristu* which means soldiers of Christ, warriors of Christ of prayer intercessors. The main objective of the Movement since its formation, was to organise prayer meetings especially for the blind people in the church and Christians were encouraged to pray for their families, country, one another as well as to pray for the Church (Mutumburanzou, 1999:61). The *Varwi VaKristu* movement was started at Chibi and later on spread to other mission stations, rural and urban congregations of the RCZ. The Varwi movement stretched their financial support to the poor, needy departments of the Church such as the Theological College, hospitals, and a Copota special school for the Blind and Henry Murray School for the Deaf, and Evangelism says Mutumburanzou (1999:62).

2.5.6 Theological Training

In 1924 the Mission Council suggested to start a Theological Seminary to train evangelists who would be chosen from evangelist-teachers. The qualification for admission into training was moral behaviour and also that one should have been a qualified teacher in service for a solid five years. The entry qualification for teachers of that period was a standard three, and for one to be admitted into theological training, the person had to be married to a wife of good and moral behaviour/conduct, who could also read the Bible and interpret it to other people.

Recommendation of the said candidate was to be obtained from their congregation's church council. Van der Merwe (1953:47) says that the evangelisation of the continent of Africa (meaning Zimbabwe) was not going to be successful without the training of indigenous evangelists.

When enrolled at the Theological seminary, students were taught theology and social subjects, as well as practical subjects such as agriculture, metal- and craft- work. Similarly, the wives of students were trained domestic science subjects as well as Biblical subjects. After completion of the theological training which took two years, the Presbytery could post these evangelists to the congregations that had commended them, yet the Presbytery had the right to post them to other congregations or places where there was greater need for evangelism (more than that of their original or sending congregations) (Van der Merwe, 1981: 112; Munikwa, 2010:17).

In 1925, the Theological school was established at Morgenster with the main purpose of training evangelists who would be sent as Christ's ambassadors to different regions and districts of the country to spread the good news in villages, mines, farms and towns. According to Van der Merwe (1981:112), the first group to be enrolled for theological training consisted of Ezra Shumba²⁴ from Chibi, Shadreck Shumba from Chipinge, Josias Chipadza from Makumbe, and Jeremia Matanga from Gutu. This system was supported by Mutumburanzou (1999:74) who holds that the training of evangelists went on for ten continuous years, and because of this, many evangelists were trained and posted to ministry; as a result many people were converted and surrendered their life to Jesus Christ, and, therefore, many more congregations were established.

2.5.7 Literature and the Printing Press

In 1913, the Mission Printing Press was established at Morgenster Mission; because of this development, the bi-monthly publication of the Church magazine called *Munyai WaShe* (The messenger of Christ) was launched. The publication of the Church magazine was one of the best

²⁴ Ezra Shumba was the first African minister to be ordained in the RCZ. In recognition of this a Hall was named after him at the Church's headquarters in Masvingo City.

ways of doing evangelism through the production of literature. The church magazine assisted the church members to understand and get first-hand information about the developments in the Church and to know more about Jesus Christ. The printing press was started/established mainly to enable the printing of the Bible which was to be translated in the vernacular and for the printing of the hymn books. The typist and the first printer to work in this printing press was Coxton Chinengundu; the press developed from a small typing- machine/type-writer to a small manual press, then a petrol press and ultimately, it developed into an electric printing press (Mutumburanzou, 1999:103).

Some of the people who toiled in the printing press since its establishment were Timothy Hungwe and Joshua Lukas who were from Madzivire, near Ngundu business centre in the Chivi district, where Lukas Makoele, one of the first seven evangelists, had established an outpost in Madzivire (Munikwa 2010:18)

E. Muchuva, Jemias Matingwina, J. Muchini, E. Ndigunei, J. Bangu, A. Tore and J. Bvokocho, all came from Morgenster, the out-post which had been established by evangelist David Molea. These industrious and hard-working men helped in the translation of the Bible. It is argued/maintained that besides the translation and printing of the Bible, the printing press printed many Christian literary books, tracts, and stationery for the Church as well as stationery for schools (Van der Merwe, 1981:100). All these printing and publication activities were some of the strongest methods and approaches through which the DRCM used to evangelise the Shona and the entire country of the then Southern Rhodesia, now called Zimbabwe after independence in 1980. The church magazine, *Munyai WaShe* was first published in 1913 as a bi-monthly Christian magazine and eventually in 1954, it was published as a monthly magazine. Generally, the Church magazine was in great demand considering the illiteracy of the Shona people of that time (Van der Merwe, 1981:100). From 1913-2015 *Munyai WaShe* was a competent Church magazine which was serving as an evangelical weapon in the RCZ, because in it the Word of God was interpreted and explained in a theological way. Likewise, Van der Merwe, (1953:38) states that information was posted to all church members and all interested parties in good time.

2.5.8 The Mabhuku Bookshop

This department was established throughout all mission stations to promote the sales of Christian literature, Bibles, hymn books and it worked hand- in- hand with the department of the Printing press. Van der Merwe (1981:104) argues that without the literature and Bibles produced locally, it was going to be impossible for the evangelists to penetrate the lives of the people. So the main purpose of the Mabhuku department was to offer service to the Church, congregations and communities in the form of selling literature such as tracts, *Munyai WaShe* and Bibles. This department was named Mabhuku bookshop at a mission council held in 1958. The selling of books was one of the approaches which was used by missionaries to spread evangelical work and this spread the Word like veld fires, not only to the Shona- speaking people but throughout the country and it raised great profits for the Church – this was also used to support other projects and activities in the Church, such as evangelism, special schools (Copota for the Blind and Henry Murray for the Deaf) and the Theological Seminary. Above and beyond these mission stations some were also opened at a later stage in urban areas such as, Zvishavane, Hwange, Masvingo, Kadoma, Gweru and rural areas such as Zunga in Chivi, Chikwanda in Gutu and Lundi in Mwenezi (Mutumburanzou, 1999:104).

2.5.9 The PENYA Department

2.5.9.1 The History of Christian Radio in Africa

For many years there was a cry from various churches in Africa to establish an autonomous short -wave transmitter station to broadcast Christian programmes. Unfortunately, none of the governments of sub- Saharan Africa allowed any broadcasting stations other than the State Radio stations. At that stage a separate organisation was formed with the name of C.A.R.A. (acronym for Christian Radio Station in Africa). All the endeavours of this board was unable to obtain a broadcasting licence. In the meantime, the mission in Malawi, in collaboration with the Nkhoma synod, was in the process of setting up a sound- recording studio to produce radio programs to

broadcast the only Christian broadcasting station in Africa. This was the Radio Voice of the Gospel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. At an annual general meeting of the Rhodesian Christian Conference a strong desire for a Christian Radio Station was on the table for discussion. This also looked like a fruitless exercise, yet at this stage there appeared to be a light in the tunnel. A very wealthy man in South Africa heard about the plea of the churches and approached the management committee of the C.A.R.A; he had a game farm in Botswana and when the title deed had been transferred to his name he noted that there was a piece of land on his farm at a point where the Shashi River and the Limpopo met (Munikwa 2010:27). Since none of the adjoining governments had claimed this property, he then acquired legal advice on the matter. He was advised that he was to put up a notice on the island that it was a sovereign independent state and lawfully owned by him. If no government claimed the property, in a certain span of time it would be his “independent state” upon which to make his own laws. This means that he gave CARA the opportunity to erect a Radio station on the island. CARA acted immediately and started with the planning. The engineering department of the University of Stellenbosch designed and built the transmitter and the necessary buildings were planned and construction began. Unfortunately, one of the governments confiscated the transmitter when it arrived at its destination. CARA did not want to be involved in the dispute and stopped the project (Munikwa 2010:28).

It was a great disappointment, but in the end the churches reaped the benefit of this venture: numerous churches and missions started to prepare radio programs for this transmitter on the island. A new avenue had to be found to utilise and justify the expenses that had been incurred. All of a sudden the various state broadcasters were willing to air the programs of stake-holders. Time for Christian programs increased dramatically on these stations so that in the old Rhodesia, PENYA was one of the favourite resources of the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation (Munikwa 2010:28).

At this stage Penya had acquired enough to upgrade the studio and to appoint more staff. REV. Paul de Villiers was appointed program- manager for radio programs; Mr van Wyk was joined by Mr Pieter Oosthuisen who played a major role in the upgrading of the studio and the

construction of the mobile Evangelistic unit. He was a very talented man with diverse capabilities for the job. The Morgenster community was very helpful with the production of programs (Munikwa 2010:28-29).

The word “*Penya*’ means’ to shine’, which is self-explanatory. It shows that its main objective was to shine to those who are in darkness. The word “*Penya*” is an abbreviation which stands for “*Paridzai Evhangeri muNyika ye Africa*” which means “Preach the Gospel in the continent of Africa”. Audio-visual aids, slides, films and radio were all applied as a means of evangelisation. The establishment of *Penya* radio was discussed by the mission council in 1953 as a means of spreading the Gospel to the people of Zimbabwe. The radio department was established in 1963 and it was named *Penya* Radio in 1966. The aim of the department was to reach as many people of all age groups as possible through broadcasting. (Mutumburanzou 1999:107)

Later on the church provided a mobile unit which could move from congregation to congregation displaying and screening religious films. In 1967, it was reported that the *Penya* Radio had been granted space to air its programs at the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation, where a high standard of quality was maintained. Because of quality production the church was allocated other services such as those on Christmas, Good Friday, and programmes for children were broadcast every Sunday. This shows that during the birth and the growth of the RCZ, *PENYA* radio had a great impact on evangelisation of the Church because many people gave their lives to Jesus Christ through the *PENYA* programmes (Mutumburanzou, 1999:107).

2.5.10 Education

The missionaries who founded the DRCM, used education as another way of evangelising, so therefore, teachers had to be evangelistic. Munikwa (2011:84) records that evangelism was closely related to education, and thus schools were opened at every station and the DRCM started a teachers’ training college at Morgenster. Education was used as a way of proclaiming evangelism to non-Christians in Zimbabwe during the missionary era.

The seven evangelists who had come with A. A. Louw, went back to South Africa in 1892, to bring their families with them and hence there was need for a school for their children. Because of this, the first mission school was opened at Morgenster (Van der Merwe, 1981:54). Evangelisation and schools were and are still inseparably linked together. It is agreed that the teacher-evangelists in the mission field played the most important role to communicate the gospel in the areas where they were teaching. Education was used as an instrument to spread the good news to all places of the country.

Because of this development of using education as a tool for evangelism, teachers' training colleges were established to train teachers for teaching in out-of-school, central primary²⁵ and secondary schools. The increasing desire of black people for education called for teacher-training on a more extensive scale. Teacher-training was shaped by the educational standards set by the government as well as by the emphasis of the DRCM on evangelisation. The problem and challenge facing the DRCM was how to comply with the ever-more stringent government regulations regarding educational requirements while still maintaining its emphasis on evangelisation, which was inevitably related to the building of a young church (Van der Merwe 1981:94).

In 1911, the Mission Council started a School in Morgenster specifically for the training of teachers under the leadership of Rev, Henry W. Murray. He was intellectually, academically and spiritually well-equipped for the task for he was a teacher-pastor. In 1921, the inspector's report stated that: "The Morgenster system of Native Education has now reached a stage when for amount and variety of work, strength and qualifications of personnel, knowledge of native life and language and devotion to the native interest, it ranks amongst the most powerful agencies at work in this country for the improvement of native life" (Merwe 1981:54 & 89). In his annual report, A. A. Louw of 1928 expresses his regret at the low spiritual level of indigenous Christians. On the one hand, the Director of Native Education stressed the urgency of

²⁵ Central Primary School refers to all primary schools which were established in all mission stations and are under the responsible authority of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

educational adjustment for the DRCM but on the other hand he expressed his interests in “the spiritual progress of the Shona people” (Van der Merwe, 1981:95).

In 1936 the principal of the teachers’ training school at Morgenster complained that it was difficult to find candidates for teachers’ training who were real fishers of men. During the forties the number of catechumens seeking to become church members had increased and instructions were given by teachers from the training School. The mission- council continually stressed the importance of a mission- teacher being engaged in religious work. The Sunday school was becoming more prominent. In 1947, the Mission Council laid down the following conditions of service which had to be accepted by the new teachers- in -training who wished to enter the service of the DRCM: “Teachers’ duties will include, a) spiritual and church services, catechumen classes on evangelistic work, Sunday school and prayer meetings; b) all academic and industrial work; c) sport and welfare work” (Van der Merwe, 1981:96).

From the origin of its missionary activities in Zimbabwe the DRCM had a vision of educating women. Immediately after their arrival, the education of women was started in 1894. It was three weeks after the arrival of Mrs Louw when a sewing class for women was started. In 1909, the Mission Board approved the establishment of girls’ homes for this purpose. Some of the first converts of the DRCM were from the girls who stayed at these girls’ home (Merwe, 1981:66). A. A. Louw in 1922 stressed the significance of mission work amongst the women, including the provision of a high level of education for them. Girls’ Homes were established at all mission stations. In 1923 the mission council laid down certain rules for the Girls’ Homes. In the early days girls who had been pledged as infants to be married to a polygamist, often took refuge in the Girls’ Homes (Van der Merwe, 1981:97).

In 1931, a school for the training of the wives of African or Native teachers, ministers and evangelists, was started at Morgenster Mission. The main objective of the school was to prepare these women for a Christian home- life. Furthermore, in 1947, this school was replaced by a home- craft school which was erected with the assistance of Beit funds. A school for the Africans was once again upgraded in 1949. At first, very few girls were enrolled in the higher primary classes or the teacher- training courses. In 1931 the inspectors of Domestic Science

wrote: “It seems a great pity that there are so few girls in the training School”. The number in teachers’ training classes gradually increased, and as a result in 1945, a two- year course for training African teachers of domestic science was also introduced at Morgenster Mission station (Van der Merwe, 1981:98). Education was used as a vehicle for spreading the gospel by missionaries in the establishment and the growth of the Church.

A special school to cater for the psychologically impaired was established to cater for blind people. The DRCM opened the school in 1927 with the enrolment of only one student. It was because the mother of this boy had fled to the Chibi Mission in 1915 because of famine. The woman had fled because the husband had commanded her to go and throw the boy into the Tokwe River so that he would drown and be swept away by the flooding river (Van der Merwe 1981:98).

The missionary couple who were at Chibi Mission by then, Rev. and Mrs H Hugo decided to take the child into their care. In 1927, Mrs Hugo started to teach this blind boy. The boy was taught some religious classes which prepared him to receive Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour. After his confession of faith, he was baptised and received the name Samson. During the same year two other children were enrolled and in three years’ time the number of pupils had risen from three to twenty-eight. For the scriptural motto of the mission among the blind people of Zimbabwe, Mrs H Hugo chose Isaiah 42:16, which read:

“And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them” (Van der Merwe 1981:98).

In 1928, Mrs Hugo succeeded in obtaining a government grant for this school (Van der Merwe, 1981:98). It is understood that Mrs Hugo left Zimbabwe in 1935 and her daughter Helen then became the principal of; the school for the blind. In 1939, the school for the Blind was

transferred from Chibi Mission to Zimuto Mission and it was named Magaretha Hugo School²⁶ for the Blind in memory of its founder (Van der Merwe, 1981:98).

Pupils enrolling at this school, came from all over Zimbabwe and some even came from as far as Mozambique. About one third of the current expenses was covered by the government, the RCZ grants, and the rest of the expenses had to be supplemented by donations. The pupils receive academic and religious instruction and are also taught simple crafts, music and singing. Gospel concerts were and are still held in large cities of Zimbabwe by these blind students. The Rhodesia Herald published the following report of the concert held in Cathedral Hall, Salisbury in September, 1952: “The concert was of high standard and enthralled the large European audience. The school orchestra and the choir presented an entertaining programme for European and African music including touching gospel songs. The choir sang exceptionally well and many times the audience rose to their feet in acclamation”. These evangelical concerts, held in different places of the country, brought many souls to Christ, as well as changing the lives of many students of this school through faith in Jesus Christ (Van der Merwe, 1981:98).

The missionaries were doing evangelism in a holistic sense because it catered for both the academic and spiritual well-being, regardless of physical disabilities. The training and teaching of the School for the Blind continued along the same lines as during the first three decades of its existence, prior to the period of history now being considered. Another important extension of the training offered was the provision of after-care for the blind which had been under consideration since the early fifties and sixties. By 1968, under the direction of Mr and Mrs J. C. Esterhuysen, assistance was rendered to 77 workers who at the same time were practically self-supporting (Van der Merwe, 1981:151). These people were empowered through training to work in order to take care of themselves and their families.

²⁶ Magaretha Hugo School for the Blind is situated in Zimuto Mission on a farm known as Copota. As noted earlier the school was founded by Rev, and Mrs Hugo at Chibi Mission. Zimuto Mission is one of those mission stations which were handed over to the DRCM by the Berlin Missionary Society of Germany. The School for the Blind caters for all blind children and the Albinos. The school has a primary and a Secondary school (Van der Merwe 1981:98).

Miss Hugo, the principal of the School for Blind started a teacher- training course for five blind students in 1958. In the sixties and seventies there was a considerable increase in the number of pupils enrolled, compared to the fifties, and in 1977, it rose to 185. It was not possible to accommodate all who wanted and were qualified to enter the after -care department (Van der Merwe, 1981:151). The School for the Blind continued to bear witnesses for Christ on its own doorstep as well as in different parts of Africa and worldwide. In 1959, an evangelical tour was organised for the choir of the Magaretha Hugo School for the Blind to Stellenbosch, Cape Town and other places in the Cape Province in South Africa. The visit proved to be a great success and a real channel of blessings to the people of different races and religions. A recording was also made of the singing of the choir. Another evangelical tour was that to Israel in 1969, where the dedication of the blind pupils, their verbal witness and their message through song left a lasting impression, and a large number of gramophone records were distributed. Miss Helene Hugo had rendered her service as the principal for the Magaretha Hugo School for the Blind for thirty-six years. She retired from mission service in 1969. Her life and work was characterised by consecration, faith, dedication, self-sacrifice, prayer, and the Lord used her mightily in calling the blind to repentance and consecration. Some of the students became evangelists in the DRCM and in other denominations as well (Van der Merwe, 1981:152). One of these students who worked as an evangelist in the RCZ named Joseph Chivhoko, trained as minister and graduated on 27 November 1996. He was ordained as the minister of the Word and Sacrament in 1997 (Synod Minutes 1998:16). He was a great evangelist-pastor who was used by God to minister among the able-bodied people even though he was a blind person. He defied the old adage that being blind is a deterrent, proving that disability is not inability.

2.5.10.1 School for the Deaf

A school for the deaf and dumb students was started at Morgenster in 1948. The first group of teachers was from the school for the Deaf at Worcester, Cape Province in South Africa. The school started with an enrolment of eleven pupils. Cronje (1982:126) said, “The DRCM also cared for the deaf and a school for them was started at Morgenster in 1948 by Miss S. Smuts,

formerly from the School for the Deaf at Worcester, South Africa, and Mr. R. Manyimo²⁷ of Zimbabwe.....)In the same way as, .from the beginning, Shona teachers had assisted in the School for blind”.

The number increased from eleven pupils to forty-five by 1952. Some of the female students took courses in building and carpentry and made good progress. This school was named after the Chairman of the Mission Council who had succeeded A. A. Louw in 1937. It was called the Henry Murray School for the Deaf. From 1949 onward it received government aid (Van der Merwe, 1981:99).

Van der Merwe (1981:99) stated that: “It takes many years of schooling and language instruction to explain to the deaf person about God. Yet joy is expressed because the crucifixion of Christ has been related and explained to the two most advanced pupils through the medium of lip-reading. Soon there will be some pupils who confess their faith in Jesus Christ” reads the report of the Mission Council.

In 1950, Sir John Kennedy, his Excellency, the Governor of Southern Rhodesia visited Morgenster and was introduced to the teaching staff and pupils of the Henry Murray School for the Deaf. On that occasion one of the pupils, *Farai* (Rejoice), wrote a letter to the Governor saying that he himself had a good heart and that Jesus had died for him. Later on the Governor sent a reply in his own handwriting as follows: “I was very pleased to see you all and to hear that you are learning to read and write, so that you will grow up and be a useful person to the country and beyond; Let us pray, that God will continue to bless the good work that is being done for Africans at Morgenster” (Van der Merwe, 1981:100).

According to Van der Merwe (1981:100) it was reported at the Mission Council in 1952 that the Henry Murray School for the Deaf had decided to bring their thanks offerings to the Lord on the first Sunday of the month. This was a sign of maturity in Christian faith. Undoubtedly there was the opportunity for effective evangelism in both of these Schools, which is the School for the

²⁷ Mr. R. Manyimo was the first Shona teacher who assisted Miss S. Smuts since the establishment of this School. He was an elder brother of Gava who was one of the first seven pupils of the School.

Blind and for the Deaf. They were effectively integrated into the Dutch Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

Similarly, the School for the Deaf has produced one minister of religion in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. Synod Minutes (2014:50) the Moderator's report stated that; "Mary Chipoka²⁸ a hearing- impaired student is studying at Worcester in Cape Town, South Africa with the support of the Church". Worcester College is the same school which was mentioned in the preceding paragraphs regarding the School for the Deaf which seconded teachers to start the School for the Deaf at Morgenster. This was also noted in the minutes of the Synod of 2016, that Mary Chipoka, the first ever hearing- impaired student in the history of the RCZ (in conjunction with the Henry Murray School for the Deaf) had studied at Worcester in Cape Town, South Africa (Synod Minutes 2016:35). The RCZ's history shows that this missionary used a holistic approach in her ways of spreading the gospel to the people of Zimbabwe regardless of their visual- and hearing -impaired conditions. The ordination of the hearing- impaired minister in the RCZ was well- received in the whole country because it was aired on television, published in many newspapers and it attracted the attention of the media fraternity (RCZ *Synod Minutes*, 2018:17 & 24). The ordination of Rev Mary Chipoka- Zenda took place on 23 September 2017 was published in the local newspaper, Masvingo Mirror with the heading, "First RCZ deaf and dumb pastor" ([www. masvingomirror.com/2017/10/first-rcz-deaf-dumb-pastor.html](http://www.masvingomirror.com/2017/10/first-rcz-deaf-dumb-pastor.html) Date of access 15 Jul. 2018).

2.5.10.2 Reformed Church University

The RCZ did not cease to use education as a tool of evangelism because in 2010 it witnessed the birth of the Reformed Church University. The brief background of the University is as follows:

"The Reformed Church University is a registered tertiary institution with a mandate to offer degrees in social needs, education, commerce and theology. The University Charter was officially permitted by the Zimbabwe Parliament and endorsed by the President in 2001. Due to

²⁸ Mary Chipoka is the first hearing- impaired pastor to be ordained in Zimbabwe. She has been ordained in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe on 23 September, 2017, at Morgenster Mission in Masvingo Province. She has been posted to work as Chaplain at the Henry Murray School for the Deaf.

a protracted misunderstanding between the Church, the then University Administration and some stakeholders, the Church stopped its support to the development of the University. The Church had to stand aloof/detached leading to the temporary closure of the University in 2004. In the same year the Government requested the Church to surrender its original name, “Great Zimbabwe University” to Masvingo State University and the Church obliged. Soon after the closure of the University, the Church, through its Moderator, Rev. Dr E. Chomutiri, requested that the University be renamed Reformed Church University (RCU) in place of Great Zimbabwe University and the request was made to the Permanent Secretary for Higher and Tertiary Education, Dr W. T. Mbizvo. Permission was granted in 2010 after effecting changes on the University Charter. The amendments on the Charter were duly effected and the Revised Charter was lastly approved by ZIMCHE²⁹ on 18 January 2011, granting the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe permission to develop its University” (Synod Minutes, 2010:43).

The Reformed Church University opened its doors to its first group of students on 15 August 2012 with a total enrolment of 75 students. In November 2012, Professor Wiseman Magwa who was leading the University as an Acting Vice- Chancellor, was appointed substantive Vice-Chancellor on a five-year renewable contract (Synod Minutes, 2014:63).

Education was used and it is still used as a vehicle for spreading the gospel to the pupils and students at all Church institutions. Devotions are held regularly in all departments. The RCZ has 13 Primary Schools, 16 Secondary Schools, 1 Teachers’ College and 1 University (Synod Minutes 2016:49-51).

Reverends and Chaplains are duty-bound/required by the Church, as the responsible authority, to conduct devotions and pastoral care to both the students and staff members. This was supported by Munikwa (2011:84) because he noted that evangelism was closely related to education and so teachers had to be more evangelistic. The researcher believes that the Church should continue to

²⁹ ZIMCHE is an acronym for the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education. The main objective of this board is to ensure that all higher education institutions begin to actively and effectively implement their mandates in line with the nation’s development needs and in conformity with the government’s expectations.

recruit teachers who are more aggressive/determined in evangelism so that they will be in a position to help the resident pastors and chaplains at all RCZ institutions of learning.

2.5.11 Medical

Healing through the use of health institutions was another way of evangelism or method which was used by the missionaries. Porterfield (2005:50) declares that hospitals and clinics became some of the intentional places which were used by missionaries to share their belief with the sick in a health situation.

The DRCM medical ministry started at Morgenster and Gutu by introduction of hospitals at these stations. The work at Morgenster Memorial Hospital in Masvingo province became the symbol of hope of the DRCM's health services (Munikwa 2011:85).

In Fort Victoria, now known as Masvingo Province, medical mission stations were founded by the Dutch Reformed Church who built a hospital at Morgenster mission (Zvobgo, 1996:204). The first medical missionary, a Dr John T. Helm, arrived in 1894. It is argued that additional to his work at Morgenster Hospital, Dr Helm was also doing voluntary work by helping the lepers on Morgenster mission farm in 1899 (Zvobgo 1996:204).

The mission hospital has been a means of rich spiritual blessing over many years. People have been healed both spiritually and physically. Under the leadership of Dr. J. Helm the staff at Morgenster hospital laboured in a humble, selfless and spiritual way. When Dr. J. Helm left Stellenbosch in Cape Town, South Africa, for the mission field, he testified: "At the call of the Lord I am going to the heathens even though I resolved first to be a missionary and then a doctor". What does he mean? In rendering medical service Dr Helm was also witnessing to Christ and proclaiming the Gospel to the patients before treating them wherever the opportunity arose (Van der Merwe, 1981:68). Establishing medical missions or hospitals was another method which was used by the missionaries to spread the gospel. Dr. John Helm laboured at Morgenster Mission Hospital for 21 years. On one occasion Dr J Helm said: "I can assure you I am in contact with the *Vakaranga* daily, in the catechumen-classes, at prayer meetings, in personal conversion of some of them than I am of your conversion" (Van der Merwe 1981:68). As noted

earlier in the preceding paragraphs, medical work among the lepers, was started in 1899. Lepers were considered to be outcasts from the Shona society, and the establishment of their settlement was a relief to them (Van der Merwe 1981:68; Zvobgo 1996:204-205). Dr Helm was appointed as the superintendent for the leper settlement in 1914; he took that as an advantage and preached the gospel to the lepers regardless of their condition or sicknesses. Van der Merwe (1981:69) noted that the first convert among lepers was Makuva (Grave)³⁰ who later on acted as an evangelist among other lepers. A number of lepers gave their lives to Christ.

The Leper settlement was later on transferred to Ngomahuru where it was put under the supervision of the government. However, the DRCM continued to minister the Word and Sacrament among the lepers even though the sacraments were to be administered separately to the church members at Ngomahuru, due to health reasons (Merwe 1981:88).

After the departure of Dr John Helm, Dr. M.H. Steyn was sent to Morgenster Mission hospital in 1924 (Van der Merwe, 1953:46). He was noted for his medical skills as well as his sympathetic attitude towards patients. Likewise, he communicated the Christian message to patients during his treatment of them. Van der Merwe (1981:86) believes that Dr M. H. Steyn encouraged evangelisation at the hospital and participated in it himself. In his report to the Mission Council in 1932 he stated that; “We always consider the proclamation of the gospel to the sick to be of the greatest importance”. More so, in his report in 1949, he asserted in his annual report; “The care of the body of the sick is the command of the Saviour. It is the application of the teaching of Christ who is our Lord, Saviour and Healer of our diseases. The teaching that He came as a Saviour of soul as well as body, must however not be neglected” (Van der Merwe 1981:86).

The use of medical institutions in the DRCM and other Mission Churches, played a major role in the spreading and preaching of the Word of God to non-believers. This was explained

³⁰ Makuva is a Shona name which means Grave. The leper who was given this name was rescued from the grave by a Roman Catholic priest where he had been buried while alive because of the chronic character of the disease. He was treated for the disease and was healed though he was severely disfigured and disabled by the disease, but he gave his life to Christ and started to care for other patients and started to proclaim the gospel to them by way of leading devotions.

expansively by Zvobgo, in his book; “*A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe, 1890-1933*”, where a lot was explained about *Medical Missions, 1893-1933* (Zvobgo 1996:204-214).

Dr. H. M. Steyn moved from Morgenster Hospital to Gutu Mission Hospital in 1960 which was the hospital of the DRCM. The researcher believes that the emphasis of the spiritual and evangelical aspect of the medical mission was planned by the first missionaries from the day of inception of the Church in Zimbabwe, as one of the methods to spread and proclaim the gospel.

Pastoral work, evangelisation and counselling to the admitted patients led to many being converted to Christ during their stay in hospital. In 1966, Dr. du Toit who replaced Dr. H. M. Steyn at Morgenster Hospital, reported that; “The Lord draws patients to Him because/since the entire change has taken place because of the witness of many Christians who surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ while in the hospital” (Van der Merwe, 1981:143).

All medical staff were trained to be evangelist-nurses in all the Church hospitals. In 1976, the Morgenster medical- report stated: “The hospital has helped to build the Church, the body of Christ. Now the Church must see the hospital as the vital part of its life and outreach in evangelism and not just as a medical convenience.” In the same year the same sentiments were stated in the Gutu Hospital medical- report as follows: “It is our opinion that a mission hospital should exist for two reasons: 1) as part of the work of charity of the church in the form of medical aid. 2) The opportunity for evangelisation of people which is brought to the doorstep of the local church organisation. It is in this latter department.... where we required the service of our ordained brothers in re-organising a systematic and more instructive approach.” The medical work in the DRCM, now known as RCZ, was and is still bearing a powerful and convincing Christian witness by word of mouth and by acts of loving care of the sick, although (this witness) bearing was related more to the local congregations (Van der Merwe, 1981:145).

The medical angle was one of the line of attack used by the DRCM in spreading and propagating the gospel. The chief aim of using these different ways of evangelism was to bring people to Christ as well as addressing their physical needs. Education was done at its highest level, not only to bring enlightenment to the people for their betterment but also for them to understand

and read the Bible so that it would penetrate their minds. Health was a concern for the missionaries, so if people came to the Mission hospitals, it was just the same as people coming for catechism classes. The researcher agrees that through the use of the approaches by the DRCM missionaries as ways of evangelisation, many people were led to give their lives to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

2.6 The history of the RCZ's Church government

The history of the RCZ's church government went through different stages or changes in the type of government since its inception in 1891. The researcher agrees with what was said by Rutoro (2007:89):

“The period between 1891 and 1952 is known by scholars as the pioneer era in the leadership of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The leadership structures of the RCZ in this period were dominated by the white male clergy. White male missionaries occupied all key and prestigious leadership positions. The leadership of the RCZ passed through various stages such as the DRC Mission Board leadership, the Mission Council, the Church Council, the Council of Congregations, the Moderamen, and Synodical Board.”

A brief background of all these leadership structures is explored to prove the system of church government in the RCZ since its inception in 1891 to the 21st century.

2.6.1 DRC mission board

The DRC mission board was the one which initiated the mission work among the Shona people south of the Limpopo River. These were the white and coloured missionaries from South Africa. The system of government was done from South Africa under the Stellenbosch mission board which was also operating under the instruction of the DRC Synod (Van der Merwe 1981:35; Rutoro 2007:90). The Church functioned for years under the supervision of the Mission Board. Rutoro declared that the Mission Board had the prerogative to make final decisions over the

Church in Zimbabwe (Rutoro 2007:90). The ministers of the Word were from South Africa and they were supported by the DRC Cape Synod (Van der Merwe 1981:124).

Local members were not permitted to participate in any decision- making or to take up any leadership position because all government was done in South Africa by the Mother- Church of the DRC Cape Synod.

2.6.2 Mission Council

The Mission Council was made up of missionaries who were posted at all established mission stations. The mission council met for the first time on 18 April in 1905 when it was constituted. At that mission council, Rev. A. A. Louw was voted as the chairperson and Rev. PHA Fouche as secretary. In 1906, Rev. GS Murray was selected secretary. Louw and Murray assisted in their respective positions until their retirement (Van der Merwe, 1981:72; Rutoro 2007:91). The mission council was controlled by the mission secretary.

Rev. A. A. Louw retired in 1937 after serving in the mission council for thirty-two years. Rutoro (2007:91) then questioned why leadership was not shared with other capable ministers of his time. Hierarchy continued the order of the day because the laity feared to challenge the system.

The mission council was made up of ministers of religion, medical doctors serving as missionaries, the principal of the Teachers' training college, representatives of lay missionaries serving as teachers or in other capacities, and representatives of ladies serving as missionaries (Rutoro 2007:92). The Mission board of the DRC Cape Synod, discussed in paragraph 2.6.1, had the right to appoint additional members to be co-opted into the mission council. All resolutions deliberated and passed by the mission council were subject to the approval or to be repealed by the Mission Board because it was the one supervising the mission council (Van der Merwe 1981:73). Church government system of that time was one- sided because it was only the white missionaries who were allowed to be in the mission council. Rutoro (2007:92) distinguishes that the black evangelists, who had accompanied A.A. Louw and established a number of mission and rural posts, were in the mission council as observers without voting rights in this decision-making board of that time.

The government system in the RCZ has not recognised the office of evangelist to hold any leadership office in the Church since the beginning of all the councils. This was asserted by Napata (1979:2-3) and Rutoro (2007:92), and it is disheartening that most of the outposts which were started by the evangelists later became full- fledged congregations, yet these evangelists and lay- preachers received little recognition in the church.

The mission council was made up of missionaries who were in charge of various departments for it had been started by missionaries as a way of spreading the gospel to the people of Zimbabwe. However, the missionaries did not realise/acknowledge that the native people who had become members of the Church could be incorporated into the leadership offices of the Church. Local people and evangelists, even those who had come with A. A. Louw, were not considered as people who could contribute anything of value towards the planning and administration of the missionary work of which they had been part- and -parcel in the church -planting. The leadership of the time was remote- controlled from afar because the final decisions of the mission council were to be authorised by the mission board in South Africa.

2.6.3 The Church Council

The mission council managed to lay down some rules and regulations for church discipline and gave powers to ministers of the local congregations to appoint supervisors. In 1920 the Mission council established the Church council to run the affairs of the congregation. For a congregation to be established it was supposed to constitute about 300 members. The following regulations were formulated for the local church council:

- That it should be made up of a local male missionary and one or more elders depending on the needs of the congregation.
- The elders should be selected only by and from older male church members of the congregation who are married.
- The task of the Church Council was to be similar to those of the “mother Church”, but amended to suit local conditions.
- The Church Council was to meet four times a year or as often as necessary (Merwe 1981:79 & Rutoro 2007:94).

The Church Council was established as a replacement of the mission council. In the same year the Mission again established the Council of the congregations referred to as the Presbytery. The Presbytery was established to coordinate the affairs of local congregations. It was and it is the governing body with more authority than the local church council. The rules and regulations of the Presbytery were formulated as follows:

- It should involve of a male missionary who is in charge of a mission station or minister of a congregation and a male elder for each congregation.
- It should meet two days before the meeting of the Mission Council, which was the ultimate body at the same venue.
- It had to deliberate matters such as pastoral work in church, report on the work in the congregations, church discipline and other matters pertaining to the life of the church.
- It had to meet every year to elect its own chairman and secretary (Mutumburanzou 1999:52 & Rutoro 2007:94).

The Mission Board in South Africa gave its approval and the Presbytery commenced its operations in 1918. The Presbytery had the legislative powers to combine the supervisory task to its powers (Rutoro 2007:94). He (Rutoro) also argued that the Presbytery was, however, to report to the Mission Council and the Mission Board. The resolutions of the Presbytery were to be submitted to both bodies for approval before they were enacted into rules and regulations. The constitution of the Presbytery was a great development towards the building of an autonomous church with her own systems of government (Rutoro 2007:94).

White ministers were the only people who could hold leadership positions in the Presbytery from 1918 to 1952. Another important issue to note was that A. A. Louw, was the chairman of the mission council as well as the chairman of the Presbytery from 1918 to 1925(Rutoro 2007:95).

2.6.4 Formation of the Synod of the RCZ

In 1950, a delegate of Morgenster congregation called elder CA Napata, moved a motion at a Presbytery council meeting that the constitution of a Synod of the African Reformed Church³¹ be taken into consideration. This referred to the issue of giving the local church full leadership, autonomy and authority. Because of this motion the Presbytery approved the motion in principle and a committee was appointed to investigate the matter because most of the white ministers were not into that idea. The committee members were as follows: Rev. S.K. Jackson, Rev, Amon Makombe, Rev. Dr Van der Merwe and elder CA Napata (Mutumburanzou 1999:52). The submissions of the findings were done to the Presbytery in 1951 who then decided to constitute a Synod in May or September of 1952. It was decided the Presbytery would be divided into two, namely Morgenster and Gutu (Rutoro 2007:99).

On 9 September 1952, all the congregations that composed the Presbytery, established the first ever Synod of the African Reformed Church. The new governing body became self-governing since its decisions and principles were no longer subjected to the authorization of the Mission Council, as had been the case with the Presbytery which was constituted in 1918 (Van der Merwe 1981:124 & Rutoro 2007:99). However, at the initial meeting of the young Synod, only white ministers were voted into the Synod Executive (also known as the Moderamen). Rutoro (2007:100) discusses that change had not yet come over, even though it was a significant progress in the history of the RCZ. This was a major leap forward in the history of the RCZ because it exhibited that the time was crying out for the Church to be run by indigenous leadership (Mutumburanzou 1999:53). Rev. E. N. Ngara was the first African minister to be nominated as moderator at a Synod in 1961 (Baloyi 2008:13). This was in conformity to the vision of Rev. Stephanus Hofmeyr who, in 1873, had envisioned an indigenous African ministry to be victorious in new evangelized areas. In this regard, he had said: “If the Lord should afterwards appoint one out of the black nationals as an ordained minister, then he could take the

³¹ African Reformed Church (ARC) was the name given to the Church and it was named ARC because the leadership was changed to that of the local African people.

place of the white missionary and the latter could proceed to another national” (Van der Merwe 1981:38; Mutumburanzou 1999:53; Rutoro 2007:99).

It took a solid nine (9) years for the inclusion of the local ministers in the highest leadership structures of the Church namely, from 1952 to 1961. The “mother Church which is the DRC Cape Synod, took some time to equip the “daughter Church” that is the RCZ, to participate in the government system; here the researcher is trying to portray that the government system in the RCZ was dominated by the white missionaries even though their huge membership was composed of locals.

After elaborating this overview of the growth of the RCZ in a historical perspective, it won't quite be appropriate to conclude this chapter without giving attention to the system of government of the RCZ. This can only be done by the way of concisely characterising the history of the RCZ's church government system. By doing this, the research is going to spell out how the Church council, Presbytery, Synodical Committee and the Synod of the RCZ operate as governing boards of the Church.

2.6.4.1 Duties of the Church Council

The Church council in the RCZ is made up of the ordained minister/s, elders and deacons/deaconesses. Evangelists are members of the Church council with non-voting rights, so therefore, they are referred to as observers.

The duties of the Church council are as follows:

- To arrange the administration of Sunday services, Baptism and Holy Communion.
- To give guidance on the use of Church liturgies.
- To arrange programmes for evangelism within the congregation and other new areas.
- To supervise and admonish congregants to live according to the word of God and to discipline members who violate the doctrines of the Church.
- To lead Bible studies, Catechumen classes and to receive new members who are transferring from other congregations and other denominations.

- To monitor that disjunction letters are given to the right people.
- To safeguard the resources of the congregation on behalf of the RCZ.
- To do charity work
- To plan revivals for the congregation and other activities such as Reformation Sunday and other national activities, this might be planned by the Presbytery or the Synod.
- To do reviews of income and expenditure of the congregation and to check that all financial records are in order.
- To build and maintain all church structures in good shape.
- To recommend whether delimitation of big sections may become new congregations on their own.
- To safeguard the doctrines and teachings of the minister so that heresy shall not be taught to members of the congregation (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo 2017:30*).

The church government system in the RCZ rests on the Church council as the first governing board. All issues within the congregation should first be deliberated by the Church council before they are forwarded to the higher office. The governance of the RCZ is not a one-man thing because the minister, the elder and the deacon have different responsibilities but they complement each other and they work as a team.

The above- mentioned responsibilities of the Church Council are a combination of the duties of the office of the pastor, elder and the deacon/ness.

2.6.4.2 Duties of the minister of the Word

The RCZ believes that the office of a minister of the Word and sacraments is one of God's gadgets in the hands of Christ which He uses to build his Church. The responsibilities of a minister in a congregation are as follows:

- To expound the Word of God.
- To preach sermons about Catechism, the suffering of Christ, his death and resurrection.
- To preach about baptism, and thanksgiving sermons about Holy Communion.

- To administer sacraments such as the Holy Communion and Baptism.
- To solemnize marriages to church members
- To receive new church members though this must be done in the presence of church elders.
- To do house visitation to all congregants and to visit the sick in their homes and hospital.
- The minister is the chair of the church council.
- The minister is also responsible for drafting the duty roster for preachers, conducting funeral services, burying the dead, as well as consoling and comforting the bereaved families (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:30-31).
- The minister is a signatory of all congregational accounts.
- He/She is an overseer of all group fellowships in the congregation.

The minister, together with the elders and deacons, forms the Church Council which governs and administers the congregation on behalf of the whole Church. The system of Church government of the RCZ is from bottom to top, meaning that it is from Church council, up to the Presbytery and finally to the Synod.

2.6.4.3 Duties of an elder

An elder's office is an independent office to that of the minister of the Word and sacrament, but they complement each other. The responsibilities of elders are as follows:

- For one to be elected as an elder one must be 30 years and above.
- Elders are there to oversee the administration of the congregation by exercising the necessary supervision as a way of ensuring that the ministers of the Word, fellow elders and deacons conduct their offices faithfully.
- To help ministers of the Word by conducting house-visitations in the sections or wards as well as to visit the sick and console the bereaved families during the absence of the minister of the Word (Vorster 1999:43; RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:31).

The office of the elder in the RCZ is open to both male and female members. This was not the same during the early days of the RCZ because only married men were allowed to be elected and ordained as leaders in the Church.

The position of women in leadership circles of the RCZ was discussed fully by Rutoro (2007:115) where he described it as follows:

“The period from 1992 to 2002 showed some development regarding the position of women when the synod reconsidered their position in the broader leadership structures of the church. The decision of the Synod of 1984 whereby women were allowed to be church elders was reaffirmed. In 1992 the Zunga congregation delegated Mrs Majange to the synod meeting (Synod Minutes 1992:66/3). She became the first official women elder in the synod of the RCZ. In 1998, the Chinhoyi congregation also delegated Mrs M Chidamba to the synod meeting. She became the second women elder to attend a synod meeting” (Synod Minutes, 1998:35).

The RCZ reached its self-rule in 1952, where the elders of the Church were made-up of married men only. The synod which was held at Morgenster Mission in 1981, is where the Women’s league, from this time referred to as the Women’s Fellowship, demanded to be involved in decision- making boards such as that of church council, presbytery and synod. Their request was unanimously rejected (Synod Minutes 1981:432; Baloyi 2016:32).

Mutumburanzou (1999:20) records that the fight for women in the church in both synods of 1978 and 1981 was accepted positively at the synod of 1984. Baloyi (2016:32) concurs that at a synod held at Zimuto mission in 1984, the synod acknowledged that women can be voted as elders and deaconesses in the Church. At the same synod, it was also approved that women were now allowed to recite the liturgy when leading or conducting worship services whereas before the passing of this determination, married men had been the only ones allowed to deliver liturgy on behalf of other members of the congregation (Synod Minutes 1984:631/21).

It is against this background from the preceding paragraph regarding the synod at Zimuto Mission in 1984, that women were now allowed to take responsibility for the leadership of the Church and could be elected as elders and deaconesses of the Church. Thanks to the Almighty God, that by the time this research was undertaken, women were being elected as elders, deaconesses and some have been ordained as ministers of the Word and Sacraments.

Elders form part of the system of Church government in the RCZ, together with the minister of the Word and Sacraments, and the deacons.

2.6.4.4 Duties of deacons

Bhuku yoMurairo (2017:31) explains the duties of deacons/deaconesses as follows:

- Any person who wishes to assume the post of a deacon/deaconess in the RCZ must be 25 years of age or above.
- He /She must collect tithes, Sunday collections, and thanksgiving/harvests with the help of church elders.
- Deacons/deaconesses must take care of the poor, widows, orphans and the marginalised.
- They must fund-raise for the congregation to have enough resources.
- They must diversify and strategize ways of getting enough resources to take care of the congregation's financial needs.
- One deacon/deaconess is referred to in RCZ as the congregation treasurer or Central Deacon and accounts for all congregation funds; he/she must give quarterly reports of the income and expenditure to the church council and the congregation (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo 2017:31*)

In his dissertation for his Master degree of Theology, “*A Church Judicial Analysis of the Office of the Deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe,*” Baloyi (2016), the researcher, gave a detailed document about the office of the deacon.

The church council in every congregation of the RCZ is the one which determines how and where the said congregation is herding/flocking to. The system of church government of the RCZ dictates how the church council should run the congregation as a representative of the RCZ at large. From the church council of the RCZ we go to the Presbytery.

2.6.4.5 Duties of the Presbytery

The membership of the presbytery has already been discussed in paragraph 2.4.2 of this chapter. The duties of the presbytery are explained in the *RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:33) as follows:

- To oversee the administration of the congregations which are under its jurisdiction.
- The presbytery has the duty to protect and safeguard that the doctrines of the church are not violated by either congregants or clergy.
- To see to it that the Word of God is preached according to Reformed teachings and understandings.
- The delimitation of a new congregation is done by the presbytery in agreement with the local congregation.
- To deliberate all issues referred to it by congregations which are under its jurisdiction.
- To plan and pair congregation with congregation on the issue of a visiting minister.
- To oversee the performance and remittance of the congregation budget for the Central budget as directed by the Church.
- The presbytery appoints the elders and deacons of the new congregation.
- They receive and induct new ministers who are called to work in congregations within their presbytery (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:33).

The presbytery deals with all the issues which are referred to it by congregations within its area of operation. They are the custodians of the Church in receiving the reports from congregations. These reports are Report A, which is the detailed report of the day- to- day running of the congregation which is submitted to the presbytery every year. Another report referred to as Form B is for statistics, whereby the congregation reports about the numerical/statistical growth of the congregation. It shows the numbers of members confirmed and restored, the transfers, the weddings and the preaching posts. Form C gives the income and expenditure of the congregation for the whole year. It is the duty of the presbytery to oversee each congregation submitting these reports at the end of each year.

The presbytery is the link between the congregation and the Synod through the office of the general secretary. This will now lead us to discuss the administration of the church at large which is the duty of the Synod. The Synod runs the administration of the church through the officers who are a human resource for the church. These officers have their offices at the Synod Centre in Masvingo which is the headquarters of the RCZ.

2.7 Administrative structure of the RCZ

The RCZ attained her self-government in 1952, but she basically conserved the system of Church governance which was put in place by the DRCM. In principle of church government The Dutch Reformed Government system in 1952 was no longer reformed but Collegialistic because there permanent offices at Synod level. Rutoro (2007:91 claims that the missionaries' use of mission-board type of administration created a system of hierarchy in the governance of the church. The Presbyterian/reformed system starts with the Church Council, then moves to the Presbytery and finally to the Synod which is the highest decision- making board.

The Synod is held every two years; the Presbyteries meet once every year while the Church Council meets three times in a year. Munikwa (2001:27) notes that the Synod is the highest board of the Church that lays down the policies and can repeal and amend the Rules and Regulations of the RCZ. The work of the Synod is overseen by the Synodical Committee, which consists of the Moderature also known as the Synod Executive and two members from each Presbytery. Of the two members from each Presbytery, one must be a minister while the other must be an elder/deacon. The members of the Synodical Committee are elected at every Synod, except for the General Secretary, Moderator and the Treasurer: the General Secretary is elected every six years, the moderator every four years and the treasurer is not voted into office because he is a full-time employee of the Church, employed on a professional basis (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:22).

There are other committees that also report to the Synodical committee that are elected at each Synod; these committees are those of: Finance, Evangelism, Youth, Research and Doctrinal, Farms, Buildings, Education, Human Resources, Reformed Church University council and the Board of Governors for the Theological College. Delegates who represent the RCZ in the ecumenical boards such as the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, Christian Care, Southern Alliance of Reformed Churches, World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches, are also elected at each Synod (Munikwa 2011:28).

The head office of the RCZ is in Masvingo City in the Masvingo Province. The general secretary is the chief administrator of the Church. The human resources officer is the one who oversees that those employment procedures of the clergy and the laity in the Church are not violated. The treasurer, as the chief accountant over the Church's official duties has already been discussed in the preceding paragraphs of this chapter.

The education secretary who is the chief inspector of the educational institution in the church, works with the Education committee to monitor that the education policies of the RCZ are not being violated by the heads of schools and colleges. The education secretary is the person linking the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, and development on all issues that affect the Church's education policies. The youth director works with the youth committee to oversee the work of the youth in the RCZ. According to Munikwa (2001:28), the general secretary is a member of all the committees (Ex-officio) for he/she is the one who gives a report to the Synodical committee. All these officers operate at the Church headquarters on a full-time basis³².

Therefore, the office of the general secretary is the command centre where all the information on the Church at large can be obtained.

2.8 Conclusion

The RCZ grew from a missionary Church which was founded by the DRCM to an autonomous Church which has now spread as far as the United Kingdom, Australia and South Africa. The Church started under the leadership of the Mission council which later led to the formation of the Church council (*Rangano Doko*), Presbytery (*Rangano Huru*) and the Synod in 1952.

Various methods of spreading the gospel were introduced such as education, medicine, Literature translation, Radio broadcasting, evangelism, and fellowship groups. These were used as the means of spreading the gospel. The Church used a holistic approach in her way of doing mission. Because the church was founded by white missionaries from South Africa it continued a

³² The administrative structure of the RCZ is found in Chapter 5 (Organogram).

long time under the leadership of the white clergy. At present the RCZ is wholly owned and administered by the indigenous clergy. The system of government is now independent from the mother Church in South Africa. The governance of the RCZ is done through the Church Council, Presbytery and the Synod as the highest decision- making board.

Having discussed the development of the general structure of the RCZ in this chapter, the following chapter will examine the theological government system in a Reformed approach. This will help the researcher to prove whether the RCZ's theological understanding of the government system is still relevant to the Presbyterian type of government or not.

CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is to attend to the historical development of the doctrine of the Church. Attention will be given to the Church government system of the Reformed/Presbyterian Churches. Baloyi (2016:68) explains that these above-mentioned Churches have their foundations in the *Church Order of the Synod of Dort 1618-1619*³³. A wide array of Church polity experts and theologians will be consulted and discussed/involved in this chapter.

This chapter will address *Objective 2: What is the historical development of the doctrine of the church since the inception of the Church Order at the Synod of Dort, 1618/1619?* By trying to answer this research question, the researcher will discuss the historical development of the Church government system of the Reformed Churches since the inception of the Church Order of Dort at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619³⁴). Different forms of Church government will also be discussed even though the focus of this research will be a theological evaluation of the government system in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The RCZ is the brainchild of the DRC Cape Synod as was discussed in the preceding chapter.

Because of the name “*Reformed Church in Zimbabwe*”, the Church is claiming to follow the Reformed/Presbyterian government system in her administration. This will only be proved to be correct and authentic when the researcher embarks on the theological evaluation of the government system of the RCZ in chapter five of this study.

³³This was an international assembly of the Church which was called by the States General of the Netherlands to settle some ecclesiastical and doctrinal matters that had been troubling the Reformed Church of the Netherlands. Elwell (1984:331) mentioned that the assembly was attended by thirty-five pastors, a number of elders from the Dutch Churches, five theological professors from the Netherlands, eighteen deputies from the States-General, and twenty-seven foreign delegates. Much of the Synod of Dort will be discussed in this chapter. This will help us to answer Research Question 4.2.

³⁴ See annexure 1 for the Church Order of Dordt.

According to Hanko (1962:5) John Calvin was the one who initiated the work of coming up with the principles of the Reformed church polity in his teachings of the Reformation which he started in Geneva. On the same note Hanko proclaims that the Reformed system of church government which is referred to in many Churches worldwide is under the influence of Calvin. It is very important to know that before the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) various synods had taken place earlier. The first Synod was held at Emden in 1571 and at this Synod it was approved that the system and order of each congregation must regulate its own affairs. However, they wanted to have a Church Order which was based on the Word of God (Hanko 1962:5). In other words this Synod approved that their confession was to be recognized by all churches even though they were to preserve the independence of each congregation. Preserving the autonomy of each congregation means that the local church council/session was authorized to run the affairs of its own congregation independently.

According to Hanko (1962:7) and FRC Church Order (2010:8) for the preservation of good order in the church of Christ, it is obligatory that there should be offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; the following articles treat these matters in due order (Article 1) (FRC Church Order, 2010:8). This article is an introduction to the whole Church Order, in other words, it is a summary which states the main divisions of the Church Order. This chapter is mainly focused on the first two sections, which deals with that of the Offices, and of the Assemblies.

The historical perspective of the government systems of church including that of John Calvin, had its contextual in the Swiss Reformation, which originated from Switzerland under Zwingli. This was driven by the crumbling of the crux of Christianity under the Roman Catholic Church (Schaff 1893:10; Baloyi 2016:69)³⁵

³⁵ Phillip Schaff wrote the book, "*The History of the Christian Church*" and described the Swiss Reformation and the Reformation of John Calvin in detail. This book was used as a reference by this researcher when he was doing his research for his Masters Studies in Theology at Stellenbosch University. The following two paragraphs are an extract from that research (Baloyi 2016:69).

The Church in Switzerland was very immoral and needed Reformation, which was taking place in Germany. Zwingli responded against this immorality that was taking place in Switzerland (Schaff 1893:11). Protestantism provided a larger opportunity to individual and national freedom and a greater variety of expansion than Roman Catholicism, which stresses uniformity in doctrine, discipline, and worship; this was a cry of despair from Zwingli.³⁶ It has no evident centre or headship, and comprises of a number of separate and self-governing organisations under the invisible headship of Christ. It is one flock, but has many folds. Variety in unity and unity in variety is the law of God in nature and history. Protestantism so far has a fully-developed variety, but has not yet realised its unity, argues Schaff (1893:12).

Schaff (1893:12) articulates that this is why the Restructuring (Reformation) of the 16th century is the mother or the grandma of at least half a dozen families of enthusiastic denominations, not counting the sub-divisions. Lutheranism has its strong suit in Germany and Scandinavia; the Reformed Church its power in Great Britain and North America. The Reformed Declaration of guilt or confessions developed into different types: travelling westward with the course of Christianity and civilisation, it became more authoritative in Holland, England, and Scotland than in Switzerland, but the chief physiognomies that distinguished it from the Lutheran Confession, had already been established by Zwingli and Calvin. With this short-lived history of the Swiss Reformation, the reformation had started a long time before Calvin. Zwingli toiled for twelve years fighting for the Reformation from 1519 to 1531, and emphasised the Word of God as it is contained in the Bible, especially the New Testament, as the only canon for the Christian faith and practice. This is the objective belief of Protestantism that reins the whole of theology (Schaff 1893:67, 69).

The argument of Zwingli and Calvin was that the systems of church government were theologically sound and their relevance was and should be formulated in agreement with the Word of God as its yardstick. With this brief history of the Swiss Reformation the researcher is

³⁶ Different forms of Church government will be discussed in this chapter as a way to show the argument of Zwingli.

going to discuss different forms of Church government which arose as a result of this Reformation.

3.2 Forms of Church Government

There are different systems of church government. Grudem (1994:923) asserts that forms of Church government can be broken down into three large categories, namely the Episcopalian, the Congregational and the Presbyterian. These three forms of church government will be explained in detail. However, some of the Reformed Church polity experts acknowledge these forms of church government but they use different terms. Vorster (1999:10-13) mentions five types of church government, namely, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic system, Lutheran system³⁷, Collegialism³⁸, and Independentism

Hanko (1962:2-3) also mentions five different forms of Church government which are as follows: Congregational form of Church government, Erastianism, Romish system, Episcopalian

³⁷ Luther said that the church is primarily spiritual and invisible. In contrast to the Roman Catholic's emphasis on the sacrament as the means of God's grace, he acknowledged the ministry of the Word as the foremost way of the rule of Christ. The preaching of the Gospel assembles the Church. In this way the relation between the invisible church and the visible church can be established. The relation between the church and the state is important in Luther's view on church government. His fundamental statement is that all the powers that be, come from God. The church is a spiritual regiment and can only exercise authority through the Word and sacraments. The church, therefore, cannot extend its authority to civil life as was the case with the Roman Catholic system. On the other hand, the state can in no way intervene with the church. Civil government can assist the church, but cannot govern it (Vorster 1999:10-11). A closer look at how Vorster explains the Lutheran system of church government, shows that it is an Episcopalian system of church government.

³⁸ The Lutheran system of church government produced the so-called Episcopalian system. In this system the church as institute, is seen as the source of ecclesiastical authority. The offices in the church are based on the institute and not on the rule of Christ as the head of the church. The church functions as a society (synod) with various branches (local congregations). The synod and the office-bearers of the synod have the highest authority, whilst the offices in the local church are subordinate. The synod determines the regulations of the church and these regulations replace the Biblical and confessional standards for Church polity.

In Collegialism, church fellowship is based on the principle of hierarchy. For example: the classis, regional synod and the general synod are seen as independent higher meetings, each as a legal entity, where a majority of votes and not the Biblical principles, determines the decisions of that particular body. The elected chairman of the synod becomes the mouthpiece of the church (Vorster 1999:12-13). A theological evaluation of the Collegialist system of church government will be discussed in comparison with the government system of the RCZ in Chapter 5 where the research will discuss much about the merits and demerits of the theological evaluation of the RCZ's government system.

system, and the Reformed system of church government. A closer look at all these terms used by the different authors, means one thing: it can be broken down into sub-divisions, and therefore, a lot of time will be spent on discussing the form of church government mentioned by Grudem (1994:923-937). Erickson (1998:342) argued that even if we agree on different forms of Church government, he asserts that an ultimate form of church government should fulfil the biblical ideologies of order and the priesthood of all believers. With this in mind he mentioned four forms of church government:³⁹ According to Coertzen (1998:15) all structures of church government acknowledge that Christ is the Head of the church, it has been found in the history of the church and theology that Christ's Headship has interpreted in different ways.

3.2.1 The Episcopal

The Episcopalian type of governance is composed of a three-level hierarchical structure. Harvey (1982:38) maintains that the issue of hierarchy is dominant in this three-level structure. The ecclesiastical power belongs to the priesthood in three orders, which entails the bishops, priests and deacons. This form of church government is where authority is bestowed in bishops, as in the Methodist, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic churches (Enns 1984:710). This is also supported by Erickson (1983:1070) who noted that in the Episcopal form of church government, authority belongs to the bishop. The bishop of the Church in the Roman Catholic is regarded as Christ's deputy here on earth declares Coertzen (1998:15).

Churches which use this form of church government are the Roman Catholic, the Anglican, the Lutheran Church and the Methodist denominations. The three-level hierarchical structure is explained by Nafziger (2017:2) as follows: the first level is the deaconate whose duties are to support the presbyter by caring for the physical needs of the parish. The presbyter occupies the second tier of governance, and in some Anglican Churches is referred to as a priest. The priest is tasked with the preaching to and praying for the congregation. The final level, which is the

³⁹ In his book, *"Introducing Christian Doctrine"*, Erickson discussed four forms of Church government, namely Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational and Non-government (pages 342-344). The non-government form of church government is found in those Churches such as the Quakers (Friends) and the Plymouth Brethren. They have eliminated all governmental structures and their emphasis is on the inner working of the Holy Spirit as the leader of the Church (Erickson 1998:344).

highest position in this structure, is occupied by the bishop. The bishop is the one who is tasked with guarding the unity of the church as well as her doctrine. Following this three-level structure, only the bishops are given the authority to ordain priests/presbyters for the church (Nafziger 2017:3). This system of church government gives more power to the clergy.

More so Grudem (1994:923) clearly states that in the Episcopalian system, an archbishop has power over many bishops⁴⁰. This form of government is modest in decision-making and there is unity in the church doctrine. Episcopalian government has the benefit of being efficient and speedy in doing the Lord's work⁴¹.

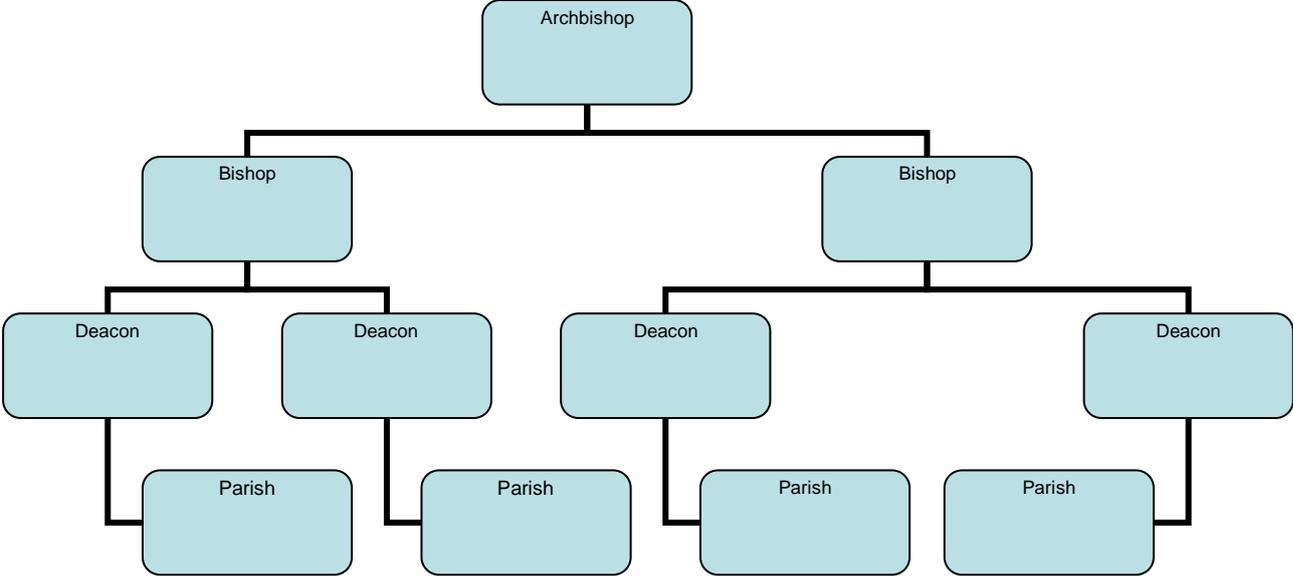
While it may be contended that the development of the Episcopalian system with the single bishops in authority over several churches was beneficial in the early church, one may also dispute that it was a deviation from the New Testament, says Grudem (1994:925). Because of this argument of Grudem it shows that this system of church government has its disadvantages in operation. There is unruly behaviour in the pattern of this form of church government. Then too, in the Episcopalian form of government all authority is vested in the Pope as the Supreme head over the church. This form of government looks to the Pope as the head, and the final word in all religious matters. The individual with this authority claims to be led by the Spirit and his decision is final⁴². According to Erickson (1998:991-992) bishops are viewed as the only principal means on earth through which God communicates His authority. This can be summarized with this flow chart of authority and responsibilities, as illustrated below:

⁴⁰ In the New Testament the office of the bishop is not a distinct office but it is simply a synonym for the name 'elder'. The argument here is that this system is not biblical because there is no single bishop in the New Testament, because the word 'bishops' (overseers) is always written in the plural. This was done as a way of guarding against abuse of power.

⁴¹ Uzoaru Godson wrote on Church government, Christian Theology and Biblical Studies (pp 1-9). [http://www.academia.edu/14150880/CHURCH GOVERNMENT](http://www.academia.edu/14150880/CHURCH_GOVERNMENT) access 24 May 2018.

⁴² [http://www.academia.edu/14150880/CHURCH GOVERNMENT](http://www.academia.edu/14150880/CHURCH_GOVERNMENT) access 24 May 2018.

Figure 3-1 Structure of the Episcopalian form of government



Hammons (2016:10) notes that the most highly developed form of episcopacy is in the Roman Catholic Church. This is because in the Catholic Church the bishop of Rome emerges as the supreme bishop and has come to be known as the pope or the father of the entire church. The pope has the authority over the whole church.

We have to conclude that the Episcopalian form of government has its advantages and its disadvantages as well. It does not have its origin from the Bible; the authority of church government is centred in one person who is the bishop. Erickson (1998:343) supports this idea that all authority resides in the bishop. There is the idea of different stages of ministry as well as different degrees of ordination. The first level is that you start as an ordinary priest and the second stage is that you are also ordained as a bishop. It is argued that the bishop has the role to exercise the power of God which is vested in him (Erickson 1998:343).

3.2.2 The congregational form of Church government

In the Congregational form of Church government all ecclesiastical power is exercised by the local church, gathered as a congregation; the decisions are made in the individual church and are subject to no reversal by any other ecclesiastical body (Harvey 1982:39). This is a form of

church government in which authority is entrusted in the congregation, as in Baptist, Evangelical, Free and Independent churches (Enns 1984:707).

Grudem (1994:928-936) explains that the congregational form of church government has five different types of church government, namely Single Elder (or Single Pastor), Plural local Elder, Corporate Board, Pure Democracy, and No Government but the Holy Spirit. The single elder is most commonly found in the Baptist Churches in the United States. The pastor in this form of church government is seen as the only elder in the church. There is a board of elected deacons who serve under the authority of the pastor (Grudem 1994:928). Most decisions are brought to the congregation to make the final determinations.

The second group defined by Grudem (1994:932) is the Plural Local Elders: in this system the elders rule the church and have the authority to rule over the church through the power of Christ as the head of the Church. More so, in this system there is more than one elder equated to the Single elder discussed in the previous paragraph. The strength of this structure of government is seen in the fact that the pastor does not have power on his own over the congregation, but that authority have its place collectively to the entire group of elders⁴³ says Grudem (1994:933).

It is argued that this system has been labelled, “Plural local elders” in order for the author to distinguish it from the Presbyterian system where elders, if gathered as a presbytery or synod assembly, have authority over more than their local congregations (Grudem 1994:935). The Congregational system of church government demonstrates that all authority is within the local congregation. There is an element of liberation within each congregation.

The Corporate board is another form of congregational church government, though it is not commonly used. Grudem (1994:935) notes that this system is found in Evangelical churches. This form of church government is not scriptural because the church will be run like a modern

⁴³ This can be called elder board. The pastor himself, like every other elder in the board, is subject to the authority of the elder board as a whole. This will prevent the pastor from making mistakes and support him in diversity and protect him against any form of opposition from the congregation.

business. The pastor will be reduced from a spiritual leader to a mere employee⁴⁴. The authority of the pastor is seriously manipulated (can be jeopardised) if the leaders of the congregation are the bosses of the pastor.

According to Grudem (1994:935), a pure self-ruled government system advocates that everything must come to the congregational meeting. Every decision rests within the congregation as a whole. With a pure democracy, authority is within the congregation. In this system of church government endless debates are the order of the day because every member of the congregation is a leader. There is no outside power which can order the course of action to the local church or congregation (Erickson 1983:1078). In this system of church government every member of the local congregation has a voice in the said congregation.

The fifth church government system stated by Grudem (1994:936), is that of no government but the Holy Spirit. In this case, the church would reject that any form of government is needed, for it would depend on all the members of the congregation to be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in their own lives, and decisions would generally be made by agreement, says Grudem (1994:936). This system is subject to manipulation and misuse in most decision-making processes. It is also not in line with the New Testament teachings of church government system.

Vorster (1999:13) denotes to the congregational system of church government as Independentism, where he argues that in this system each congregation is seen as totally independent. In a local congregation, authority is situated in the congregation and decisions are made by a majority of votes; the church council should implement the decisions without amending or changing the contents. The rule of Christ by means of elders in the church is replaced by the rule of Christ by means of the majority vote in the congregation, says Vorster (1999:13). As for major assemblies such as the presbytery and synod, their authorities are limited to advice. The local congregation has the full authority to govern itself as an independent board. The greatest attribute of the congregational system of church government is that each

⁴⁴ This model of church government deprives the pastor of sharing in the ruling authority and eldership responsibilities effectively because all authority is vested in the board of directors. The pastor is recognised as the chief executive officer of the company. Therefore any system of church government without its origin from the Bible, must be questionable.

congregation is autonomous; each congregation calls its own pastor and determines its own budget. It purchases and owns property independent of any outside authorities. There is an incentive of stewardship in the congregational government system. The care of the ministry and maintenance are the responsibility of the local congregation, and that can invite greater giving, service, and responsibility in managing resources, argues Erickson (1998:998).

The major weakness of the congregational system of church government, is that of undermining the biblical evidence. In the New Testament, Hammons (2016:19) asserts that there were distinctly separate offices of deacon, elder, and bishop in the Bible. In the congregational form of church government, people may make decisions during deliberations without the advantage of good or adequate information. There may then be a spirit of competitiveness among congregants.

3.2.3 The Presbyterian form of church government

Harvey (1984:38) explains the Presbyterian form of church government as follows:

“The Presbyterianism that the reception of members and the discipline are committed to the session, composed of the pastor and elders elected by the congregation; but all ecclesiastical acts are subject to revision before the higher church courts composed of pastors and elders from many other congregations. The church, according to the Presbyterian concept, consists of many distinct congregations assembled representatively, by the pastor and elders, in one body, in which resides all ecclesiastical power. Hence, there is a gradation of courts namely by the session, elected by the individual congregation: the presbytery, composed of delegates from several sessions, the synod, a local body composed of delegates from several presbyteries; and the general assembly, composed of delegates from all the presbyteries, constitute the court of last appeal”.

Grudem (1994:926) agrees with Harvey (1984:38) that each local congregation should choose elders to a session. More so, the pastor of the congregation will be one of the elders in the session, and must have equal authority to that of other elders. The session has the governing

authority over the local church. The members of the session, that is, the elders, are also members of a presbytery, which has the authority over several churches in a region⁴⁵.

Vorster (1999:10) explains that the Presbyterian system of church government is grounded on the concept of the church within the framework of the kingdom of God. Christ is the King of the kingdom of God and the Head of the people of God, the church. Unlike the two previous discussed systems of church government on 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, the Presbyterian form of church government places Jesus Christ at the centre and recognises Him as the Head of the church. The researcher agrees with Vorster (1999:10) who says that; “Christ is the Head of the church and he governs his church through the Holy Spirit, with the Word by means of called and gifted believers according to the practice of the early congregations. They are the elders with the main task of being servants in the service of the King. They should execute his supreme will with regard to the church, the kingdom and the Word (Eph. 4:11&12)”.

The Presbyterian form of church government⁴⁶ is that in which the authority resides in a presbytery which is a council of elders. It is noted that this form of government falls midway between the form of church government of the Episcopalian and that of the congregationalism. In the Episcopalian form of church government, the authority is entirely in the hands of the clergy, whilst in the congregationalism form of church government the authority is in the hands of the lay people which is the congregation. In the Presbyterian system, the governing of the church is by a council of elders which includes the clergy. The congregation is allowed to vote in some of the church matters (See Acts 15 and Hebrews 13:17)⁴⁷.

As was explained by Enns (1989:369) in *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, the name Presbyterian originates from the Greek word *presbuteros*, meaning “elder,” and proposes the

⁴⁵ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 926. He mentions that members of the session (the elders) are members of the presbytery, meaning the issue of delegates or representatives will be in the general synod.

⁴⁶ A form of church government in which authority is vested in the elders in Presbyterian, and Reformed churches.

⁴⁷ Uzoaru Godson wrote on Church government, Christian Theology and Biblical Studies (pp 1-9). [http://www.academia.edu/14150880/CHURCH GOVERNMENT](http://www.academia.edu/14150880/CHURCH_GOVERNMENT) assess 24 May 2018.

dignity, maturity, and age of the church leaders. The Presbyterian form of church government emphasizes a representative rule by the elders who are appointed or elected by the congregation. A Session⁴⁸ is made up of elected ruling elders and is presided over by the teaching elders.

Furthermore, Enns (1989:369) indicates that the major authority of the meeting is the presbytery which includes all ordained ministers or teaching elders as well as ruling elders from each local congregation in a region. In the Presbyterian system's point of view, the presbytery is under the synod, and over the synod is the general assembly, which is the major court. In all the bodies there should be equal representation between ministers of the Word and the ruling elders. The pastor attends as one of the elders which means that the authority is vested in the council not in an individual, as is the case with the Episcopalian form of church government.

In the Presbyterian form of church government there is multiplicity in the leadership style- hence the people who make decisions in the church are informed on the issues and on the scriptural or theological knowledge. There is cooperation in the coordinating among both the laity and the clergy. As written by Vorster (1999:10): Christ is the Head of the church and he governs his church through the power of the Holy Spirit in this form of church government, so that the scripture has the final authority in all deliberations. On the other hand the Presbyterian form of church government has the weakness of taking its time in decision- making because of the issue of plurality in leadership as mentioned earlier at the beginning of this paragraph. This is supported by Erickson (1998:343) where he mentions that authority in this system of church government is exercised in a chain of governing assemblies. These governing bodies are the Consistory (which is the decision- making board at a local church, whereas congregations in one area are governed by the presbytery. The synod is made up of all the presbyteries combined together.

Allison (2011:588) mentions that Presbyterian churches and Reformed churches are ruled by elders and deacons at the local level, however the later are not part of the church government, but

⁴⁸ Session in the RCZ is hereafter referred to as the church council made up of ruling elders who are elected lay leaders and is presided over by a teaching elder referred to as the ordained minister/ministers.

they also have regional and national assemblies that exercise authority through elders. The argument here is that the elders are there to exercise authority through the government of the church at local, regional and national assemblies.

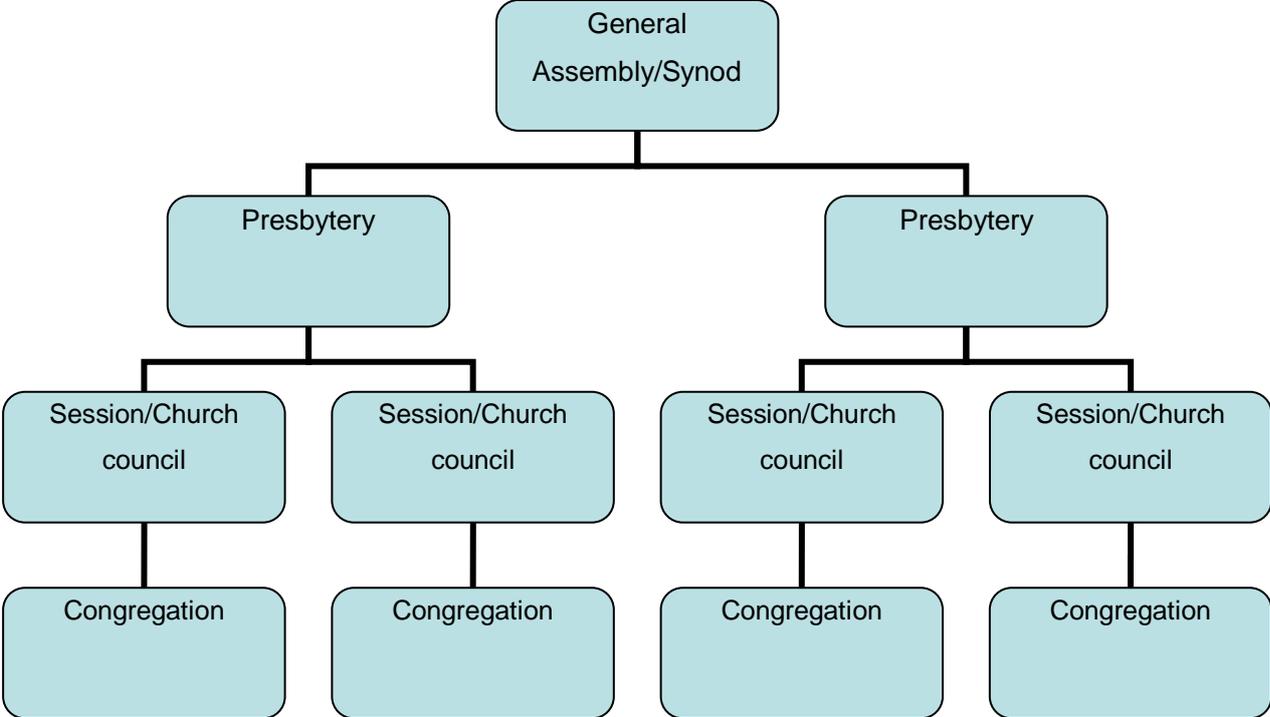
The system of the Presbyterian form of church government varies from that of the episcopal because it has only one level of clergy. There are no sophisticated levels such as that of bishop, and even those selected to do managerial leaderships within ruling assemblies, do not receive special ordination as is the case in the episcopal form of church government comments Erickson (1998:344).

Too much authority in the major assemblies such as that of the presbytery and synod (if not guided) will be problematic in local congregations. However, the government of the church through synod or general synod is a plus because this reflects the unity of the church as the body of Christ. This is not the case with the Episcopalian and congregational form of church government where, in the former, all authority is vested in the bishop, and in the latter, all authority is vested in the local congregation.

The members of the sessions from several local churches, within a geographical area, are also members of the presbytery which have ruling authority over these churches. Some members of the presbytery then are also members of the “general assembly.” This general assembly represents governance for the nation or world says Hammons (2016:13).

The system of church government is illustrated in the diagram below.

Figure 3-2 Structure of the Presbyterian form of government



One might ask the question why these forms of government were formulated in the first place. Vorster (1999:6) argues that the Church of the Reformation intended to develop a model of the Church where worship and ministry could be conducted in a Theological fashion. With all this background information about different systems of church government ,attention will now be given to the historical development of the form of church government of the Presbyterian/Reformed Churches who had their grounds in the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances for the Church in Genève* in 1541 of John Calvin, and the *Church Order of the Synod of Dort 1618-1619*.The Church history of Calvin can be outlined back to the history of the Swiss Reformation, which devised in Switzerland under Zwingli. This was provoked by the putrefying of the essence of Christianity under the Roman Catholic Church (Schaff 1893:10)⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ Phillip Schaff was a Church historian who authored the book: *The History of the Christian Church* and described the Swiss Reformation and the Reformation of John Calvin in detail

Baloyi (2016:69) asserts that the Church in Switzerland was very fraudulent and needed Reformation, as was being experienced in Germany. In Germany Zwingli reacted against the wickedness that was taking place in Switzerland. Protestantism provides a larger opportunity to individual and national freedom and variety of change than Roman Catholicism, which demands standardization in doctrine, discipline, and worship; this was the cry of Zwingli. It has no noticeable centre or headship, and involves of a number of separate and self-regulating organisations under the undistinguishable headship of Christ. It is one flock, but has many folds. Variety in unity and unity in variety is the law of God in nature and history. Protestantism so far has a fully developed variety, but not yet a realised unity, argues Schaff (1893:12)⁵⁰.

According to Schaff (1893:12), the Reformation of the 16th century is referred to as the mother or the grandmother of at least half or more than a dozen families of evangelical denominations, not counting the sub-divisions. Lutheranism has its strength in Germany and Scandinavia; the Reformed Church, in Great Britain and North America. The Reformed Confession has developed into different types. Travelling westward with the course of Christianity and civilisation it has become more powerful and stronger in the Netherlands, Scotland, and England, more than was expected in Switzerland, but the chief characteristics which distinguish it from the Lutheran Confession was already developed by Zwingli and Calvin. With this short history of the Swiss Reformation, it's clear that reformation had started a long time before Calvin. Zwingli laboured for about twelve years, fighting for reformation since 1519 to 1531, and emphasized the Word of God as it is contained in the Bible, especially the New Testament teachings, as the only rule of Christian faith and practice. This is the objective principle of Protestantism that controls the whole of theology (Schaff 1893:67, 69).

3.3 The background of John Calvin

According to Baloyi (2016:70), John Calvin (10 July 1509- 27 May 1564) was the founder of a system of church government. He was an influential French theologian and a pastor during the

⁵⁰ Also refer to Baloyi Ezekiel's Paper/Dissertation for his Master's degree in Theology in Stellenbosch, March 2016, Unpublished titled: *A Church Judicial Analysis of the Office of the Deacon in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe*.

Protestant Reformation. He was the principal figure in the development of the system of the Christian theology later called Calvinism. Calvin initially trained as a humanist lawyer; he broke from the Roman Catholic Church around 1530. After religious tensions motivated a tense violent revolt against Protestants in France, he fled to Basel, Switzerland, where in 1536 he printed the first edition of his seminal work: *Institutes of Christian Religion*. He (Calvin) drafted a Church Order for the Reformed at Geneva, which still influences Reformed and Presbyterian order across the whole world today. Calvin argued in the draft of *Ecclesiastical Ordinances for the Church of Geneva*⁵¹ in 1541 that there are four orders of offices instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ for the government of the Church. The offices which were stated in the draft were the offices of pastors, doctors of theology, elders and that of the deacons (Calvin, 1553:58-72).

Calvin's idea of plurality in leadership of promoting four offices in the system of church government was not from his own thoughts but he argued this was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church⁵². Of the four offices declared by Calvin, each had its special tasks and duties to perform but all four were there to complement each other, not to compete against one another. The four offices will be discussed in detail later on⁵³ in this chapter. Schaff (1893:33) notes that in his *Institutes* Calvin differentiates three extra-ordinary officers and four ordinary officers. The three extra-ordinary officers of church are denoted to as apostles, prophets, and evangelists and the four ordinary officers are pastors (bishops), professors of theology (teachers), elders, and deacons⁵⁴.

⁵¹ John Calvin, *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, 1533, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, edited by J. K. S. Reid, Library of Christian Classics, Ichthus edition, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), pp.58-72, 77-82, 333-343. *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances, September & October 1541, Submitted by John Calvin and others for the City of Geneva*.

⁵² John Calvin, *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, 1533, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, edited by J. K. S. Reid, Library of Christian Classics, Ichthus edition, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), pp.58-72, 77-82, 333-343. *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances, September & October 1541, Submitted by John Calvin and others for the City of Geneva*.

⁵³ Check 3.3.1 Calvin and church government.

⁵⁴ Refer to: *Institutes* Book 1V Chapter 3. Officers of the Church. Their Election and Office, pp. 508-515.

The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances of 1541* was reviewed and some editions were added by Calvin, and this was approved by the small and large Councils of 13 November 1561. The revised edition contained the vows of allegiance of the ministers, doctors, elders, deacons and the members of the Consistory⁵⁵, and guidelines and procedures concerning the administration of the sacraments, marriages, the visitation of the sick and prisoners, the election of the Consistory, and excommunication. The final edition of the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* was made and adopted by the General Council on 3^r June 1576 (Schaff, 1893:345; Baloyi 2016:74).

In his thesis, Calvin did not exclude the clergy on the issue of church discipline as was the case in the Roman Catholic Church. Schaff (1893:347) argues that regarding church discipline of the clergy (pastors), Calvin was against the immunity of the clergy from church discipline, and wants them to be subject to the same discipline as the laypeople if they erred. This was so because he wanted them (the clergy) to set a good example of a life worth living to the laypeople whom they were pastoring. The exercising of church discipline, and excommunication was part of the writings in the *Institutes* of Calvin.

3.3.1 Calvin and Church government

As already mentioned in the preceding paragraphs Calvin discussed four offices in the Church, supported by Vorster in his book, “An introduction to Reformed Church Polity”.

There are four types of offices: ministers of the Word, professors at the Theological School, elders and deacons.⁵⁶ It is argued that Christ used the disciples in the ministry (Matt 28:19) and Christ also instituted the offices in the Church (Eph. 4:11).

⁵⁵ The word Consistory is used interchangeably with the word Session. In the RCZ, the word Church council is used with the same meaning with consistory and session. The word session is normally used in Presbyterian Churches.

⁵⁶ Refer to Article 2 of the Church order of the GKSA in Vorster. J. M. *An Introduction to Reformed Church Polity*. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom Theological Publications.

3.3.1.1 Minister of the Word

The office of the minister of the Word is to persist in prayers, proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments, attend to and superintend his fellow ministers, the elders, the deacons and the church members, and ultimately, in conjunction with the elders, exercise the discipline of the church and safeguard that everything in the Church takes place in an orderly and appropriate manner (Article 16) of the RCSA Church Order; Vorster 1999:32). The minister of the Word is not the Sovereign because Christ is the Head of the Church. The office of the minister is not subordinate to the office of the elder or the deacon but it bears its own responsibility as instruments in the broad ministry of Christ (PRC⁵⁷ Church Order, 2015: 13; Vorster 1999:35). This proves that there is equality of offices with different responsibilities.

3.3.1.2 Professors at the Theological School

The office of professor at the Theological School is one of the offices which is not recognized in some of the Presbyterian Church governments. Unlike other Reformed Churches worldwide the RCZ does not have this formal office. There are teachers at a Theological Seminary but they fall under the minister of the Word.

Article 18 of the Church Order of the “*Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika*”⁵⁸ states that:

“The duties of professors at the Theological School are to instruct ministers of the Word, interpret and explain the Word of God, and defend the true doctrine against heresies and false doctrines” (Vorster 1999:37).

The professor is a minister with a special appointment to train ministers. In some instances the professors of the Theological School act as advisors at all sessions of the major assemblies. In the RCZ the task of professors of the Theological School is done by the Doctrinal and Research Committee (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:37).

⁵⁷ PRC is an acronym for Protestant Reformed Churches.

⁵⁸ N G Kerk refers to the Dutch Reformed Church- Cape Synod,

According to Vorster (199:37), the professor is ordained in the local congregation where he lives and maintains the status and privileges of a minister. He is simultaneously regarded as a minister of all congregations but with a particular appointment. The scenario with the RCZ is that the professor of a Theological School referred to as a Lecturer of the Seminary is a member of the church council where he lives but has no voting rights (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:30)⁵⁹.

This office of the professor at a Theological School is of great importance in the doctrine of church government in the Reformed Churches. The RCZ should consider this office in a positive and objective way especially in the contemporary world where Church ministries are mushrooming in Africa. Zimbabwe as a country is not spared; therefore Christian education must be the main agenda at all church gatherings.

3.3.1.3 The Elder

The elder is elected by the local church council from the proposed candidates forwarded to it by the section or the preaching post. The office of the elder is not subordinate to the office of the minister of the Word, or to that of the professor at the Theological School. This is so because the duties jointly performed by the elders and that of the minister of the Word, elders are there to exercise the necessary supervision so as to ensure that the ministers of the Word, the fellow elders and the deacons conduct their offices faithfully (Vorster 1999:43).

Elders must conduct house visitation, visit the sick and take particular care to comfort the sick and the bereaved, to instruct church members and to evangelise new areas so that people might adopt the Christian faith (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:31).

⁵⁹ Refer to *Bhuku yoMurairo* of RCZ, Section 62.2 Article 15 which states that ministers serving in departments are members of the local church council where they live but have no voting rights.

3.3.1.4 The Deacon

In his theological treatise⁶⁰, Calvin referred to this office as the fourth order of the ecclesiastical government. This does not mean that the office of the deacon is less important than the other three offices already discussed.

The office of the deacon was established to collect money and goods to be given to the poor. It is the duty of the deacon to visit and comfort those in need and those in hospitals. They must ensure that the gifts are not wrongly applied or distributed (Vorster 1999:45). The office of the deacons is explained well and clearly defined in the early church (Acts 2:42; 4:32-37; 6:1ff).

Deacons are obliged to do house visitation with the sole purpose of comforting the sick, the bereaved, and those in need, with the Word of God and to inspire and motivate other church members to take care of those in need. The office of the deacons in the church is there to educate the congregation to take care of the needy, the marginalized and the sick.

None of the four offices in the Reformed system of church government competes with each other but they complement one another for the growth of God's church. These four offices as discussed, make the Church relevant to society where she is witnessing.

However, it will be a noble cause if the RCZ embraces these four offices as they were established, to promote the growth and propagation of God's kingdom.

On the issue of qualifications for elders and deacons, Calvin⁶¹ plainly stated that for a man to be elected in these offices, that he had to comply to those qualifications given in Scriptures (1 Tim 3:1-13).

⁶⁰ John Calvin, *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*, 1533, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, edited by J. K. S. Reid, Library of Christian Classics, Ichthus edition, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), pp.58-72, 77-82, 333-343. *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances, September & October 1541, Submitted by John Calvin and others for the City of Geneva.*

⁶¹ James Huff: WRS Journal 16:2 (August 2009):15-18, Calvin and Church Government. James Huff is the pastor of the First Bible Presbyterian Church in Kalispell, Montana.

3.3.1.5 Offices of the Church

Most of the Church Orders⁶² of the Reformed Churches worldwide note that the Church recognises the offices of the minister of the Word, Professor of Theological School, elders and deacons.

The Church Order⁶³ of the Christian Reformed Church in North America pointed out that the Church recognises the offices of the minister of the Word, elders, deacons and evangelists. RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:31) of the RCZ section 66, rule 19, supports the concept that the office of the evangelist is there in the Church. It stipulates that an evangelist is a member of the Church council but he/she does not have voting rights or the capacity to chair the Church council.

Although these offices differ from one another, they complement each other for the growth of God's kingdom (Baloyi 2016:88). Furthermore, Brink (1987:7) indicates that the same offices do exist for the government of the Church. The same idea is also supported by Borgdorff (2008:113) but replaces the office of the evangelist with the word 'mission associate'. With all these in mind, it is prudent to discuss when, where and how these offices originated.

3.3.2 The Convent of Wesel and the Synod of Emden

The *Ecclesiastical Ordinance* of Calvin was the one used as the blueprint for the development of the Church Order of Wesel, which was approved and adopted at the Convent of Wesel⁶⁴, 1568 (Bouwman 2000:33). This was during persecution when the group of reformers from Holland met in Wesel, Germany and that is why it was called, "The Convent of Wesel". The other issue discussed during the meeting of the Convent of Wesel was that there should be equality amongst

⁶² Church Orders of the Reformed Churches; starting with the Church Order of Dort (1619) Church order of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, America, South Africa (Dutch Reformed Church Cape Synod and Reformed Churches of South Africa are to be evaluated. The purpose of doing this is that all these Church Orders are the primary sources for the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*.

⁶³ The Church Order of the Christian Reformed Church in North America 1978, revised edition, explains the offices of the Church in article 2 of the Constitution.

⁶⁴ The word "Convent" means to convene or to meet. In his argument Baloyi (2016:76) noted that the meeting was not a formal meeting such as a classis, or a synod because it was a private meeting and was not made up of delegates representing their churches. It was an informal meeting.

the office-bearers of the church. According to Bouwman (2000:34) the Convent of Wesel authored the Scriptural principle basis of no lordship (domination) as Article One of their Church Order says: *“No church shall in any way lord it over the other churches, no office-bearer over other office-bearers”*.

The Convent of Wesel led to the formation of the General Synod of all the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. The Synod was held in Germany in a town called Emden in 1571 (Bouwman 2000:35). It is argued that the synod was held outside Netherlands because persecution was still taking its toll, but people managed to send their delegates to represent their local congregations to defend themselves against false doctrines which were the order of day during those days (Bouwman 2000:35, Baloyi 2016:78).

Bouwman (2000:35) says that at this synod, the delegates endorsed the Belgic Confession as the Creed of the Church. The churches who were represented at this synod promised to accept decisions which were passed at this synod because they were participants of that synod and made the decisions together. The synod of Emden laid the foundation of the systems of church government of the Dutch Reformed Church⁶⁵.

The Ecclesiastical Ordinances of Calvin laid a great foundation of the teachings and systems of government though it was revised at different synods which followed. The good part of it was that it was the basis of everything. Attention is now directed to the discussion of Church Orders, starting with the Church Order of Dort. In the following section few Church Orders of Reformed Churches are to be evaluated because the system of RCZ’s church government originated from these family churches.

⁶⁵ The historical developments in the Dutch Reformed church in the Cape, namely the Church order of De Mist in 1804 and the first synod in 1824. These developments, led to the Dutch Reformed Church away from the Reformed system of church government.

3.4 The Church Order of Dort, 1618-1619⁶⁶

Because of the conflict which arose in the Netherlands between the followers of Jacobus Arminius and the Calvinists, this led to the attack upon the teaching of predestination and reprobation as well as other issues from Calvinism (Enns 1984:504). This was also supported by Vorster (1999:4) who believes that Calvin's ideas influenced ecclesiastical resolutions about the Church Order by the early Reformed synods such as Wesel (1568); Emden (1571); Dordrecht (1574); Dordrecht (1578); Middleburg (1581); Den Haag (1586) and the important synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619).

These synods built upon the work which had been started and accomplished during the Wesel and the Emden meetings. Bouwman (2000:36) argues that after the Synod at Emden, persecutions in the Netherlands started to scale down which allowed more synods to be held without any disturbances. The churches met again in 1618 in the city of Dort as stated by Enns (1984:504) to address the heresies in Amsterdam and a number of meetings were held as a way of trying to polish/brush up the Church order, and the churches adopted it at this synod. The document which was produced here was known as the Church Order of Dort. As a result of this, the Reformed Church Orders worldwide were and are still formulated around the Church order of Dort (Bouwman 2000:36, Baloyi 2016:78). Gootjies (2007:133) records that the main reason for the Synod of Dort to be convened was the fact that the unity in doctrine, as expressed in the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism was lacking in the churches

The synod of Dort reaffirmed the teachings of the Heidelberg Catechism⁶⁷ and the Belgic Confession⁶⁸ with the major five points tabulated as follows:

1. ***Of divine predestination.*** All men sinned in Adam and lie under the curse, but God made the provision through the death of Christ. The fact that some and not others receive the gift of faith stems from God's eternal decree of election and reprobation. Election is unconditional, not based on God's foreknowledge before the foundation of the world and

⁶⁶ See annexure 1.

⁶⁷ Heidelberg Catechism

⁶⁸ Belgic Confession

purely out of His grace and according to His sovereign good pleasure, God chose some to salvation. The non-elect are left to condemnation, yet God is not the author of sin.

2. ***Of the death of Christ.*** While the death of Christ is of infinite value and sufficient to save the whole world, His atoning death extends to the elect only.
3. ***Of the corruption of man and his conversion to God.*** Man was created in the image of God, but through the sin of Adam all mankind is corrupted. It has passed to the human race so that all people are born in sin and are children of wrath. But while man is incapable of saving himself, God accomplishes salvation for elect individuals through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Those whom He has chosen in eternity He calls effectually in time. The faith that realizes salvation is itself a gift.
4. ***Of the perseverance of the saints.*** Whom God calls, He also delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin. Since God is faithful, He preserves those who believe to the end (Enns 1984:505)

The synod of Dort was there to address the teachings of Jacobus Arminius who was teaching that there is conditional election based on the foreknowledge of God; God's grace can be resisted; Christ's atonement was universal; man has free will and through prevenient grace can cooperate with God in salvation, and so the believer may lose salvation (Enns 1984:517). These articles for the Remonstrants (Arminianism)⁶⁹ were rejected and the five canons of Dort were adopted along with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.

The Church Order of Dort was framed in the national synod which was convoked and held by order of the state's general of the Netherlands, at Dordrecht in 1618-1619.

Article 1⁷⁰ of the Church Order of Dort states that in order to maintain good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary to have in it offices, assemblies, supervision of the doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline. In article 17 of the Church Order of Dort it mentioned that equality shall be maintained among ministers of the Word concerning their duties of their offices in all assemblies such as consistory, classis, regional and general synod. Furthermore

⁶⁹ This was a doctrinal system formed by Arminius Jacobus (1560-1609) as a reaction to Calvinism in the Netherlands. These beliefs were later affirmed in the five points of the Remonstrance. As already mentioned above these are: (1) Conditional election based on God's foreknowledge; (2) unlimited atonement; (3) although man has a free will he cannot save himself; (4) prevenient grace, which enables man to cooperate with God in salvation; (5) conditional perseverance-believers can be lost.

⁷⁰ Church Order of Dort (1619).

article 23 declares that the office of elder is, besides the duties of the minister of the Word, the two offices are there to see to it that the ministers together with other elders and deacons are faithful to their duties. Elders shall conduct house visitation, to comfort members of the congregation, to teach and also to exhort others to profess the Christian religion. In the same church order article 37 states that in every congregation there shall be a consistory consisting of ministers of the Word and elders, who shall meet at least every week at which the minister of the Word (or ministers, if there are more than one) shall preside in turn and govern the meeting. Taking into consideration of this article, it shows that the matters of church government is reserved for the ministers of the Word and the Elders, deacons were included from the very beginning. Article 84 of the Church Order of Dort mentions that no church shall in any way lord it over another church, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders and deacons. This Church Order is the primary source of all Church Orders of the Reformed Churches across the globe.

It should be noted from this study that the Church Order should not be confused with the Church constitution. Therefore the Church Order of Dort provides the premise on which all the Presbyterian system of church government are hinged on the Church Order of Dort (Vorster, 1999:14). The reason being that the Church Order of Dort does not stand alone but it shows that it draws its principles from the Bible. Hence it is imperative for this study to draw its evaluation from the Church Order of Dort and the Bible.

3.4.1 The Church Order of the Netherlands

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands adopted the Church order of the Synod of Dort and made some amendments⁷¹ to suit the circumstances of their country. However, they maintained the system of church government which was introduced by Calvin. Bouwman (2000:36) notes that the Church order commences with an article about its purpose and divisions. The Church order has been divided into four sections which are:

⁷¹ This is not the case anymore Ecclesiastical developments in the churches in the Netherlands led to great changes in the system of church government.

1. Offices and supervision of doctrine
2. Assemblies
3. Worship, Sacraments and Ceremonies; and
4. Discipline

The churches have agreed that there should be three offices in the Church of Jesus Christ. It is stated in Article 2 of Offices; “The offices are those of the minister of the Word, of the elder and of the deacon”. Bouwman (2000:39) explains that this Article closely echoes what the churches have confessed in the Belgic Confession:

“We believe that this true Church must be governed according to the Spiritual order which our Lord has taught us in His Word. There should be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments; there also should be elders and deacons who, together with the pastors, form the Council of the Church” (Article 30) and “We believe that the ministers of God’s Word, elders, and deacons ought to be chosen to their offices by lawful election of the Church...” (Article 31).

The system of government is well- explained in Article 22 where it is stated that in the local congregation, equality shall be maintained among the ministers, among the elders, and among the deacons, regarding their respective duties, and in other matters, as much as possible (Bouwman 2000:51). The argument here is that the Lord gives to his church the ministers, the elders and deacons with equal authority in executing their duties.

According to Bouwman (2000:67), Articles 28-50 of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands is devoted to the ecclesiastical assemblies. There are four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies maintained in the system of church government and these are the consistory, the classis⁷², the regional synod⁷³ and the general synod.

⁷² Classis is referred to as the Presbytery in the RCZ and in other Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

⁷³ Regional Synod is found in other Reformed churches but in the RCZ we do not have regional synod because when the church assembles at national level it is referred to as the synod which is the highest decision- making board. Therefore, the RCZ does not have the four kinds of assemblies as does the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.

The Consistory, the Classis, and Synod are referred to as minor and major assemblies. A consistory, represents one local church which, referred to as a congregation, is the most minor assembly, and an assembly that is broader in its representation than one church, is referred to as a major assembly (Bouwman 2000:70). These assemblies are very vital in their own tasks which cannot be overlooked and therefore these ecclesiastical assemblies shall deal with ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical way. They have the authority from the Word of God. The major assemblies are obliged to deal with issues or matters which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to its churches in general. Bouwman (2000:75) explains that in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands new matters can be put on the agenda of the major assemblies if the minor assembly believes the local congregation has dealt with it. Major assemblies such as classis and synod are short-lived because once the established agenda is finished, a synod no longer exists. The day-to-day running of the church is the duty of the local congregation through the Consistory. Therefore, the system of church government of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands must be the replica of the Church order of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619).

3.4.2 Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of North America

The church order of the Free Reformed Churches of North America states in its preamble that the Church Order was formulated based on the Church order of Dordrecht 1618 and 1619⁷⁴. It was noted that as churches they acknowledge that Christ is the only Head of the Church and everything must be done in an orderly way (1 Cor. 14:40).

For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, and supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; of these matters the following articles are treated in due order⁷⁵. Because of this, the

⁷⁴ Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of North America does not have page numbers therefore Article numbers will be used whenever information from this source is used as reference. The edition used was compiled in 2004 by the Publications Committee, C. A. Schouls, and Chatham, ON.

⁷⁵ Article 1.

Church order's articles 2-28 treat the issue of offices. The officials must be confessing male members of the church who meet the Biblical requirements for them to be eligible for the office of the minister of the Word, of the professors of theology, of the elders and of the deacons. They must have been officially called and ordained or installed for them to rule and teach as officers in the church⁷⁶.

When talking about the maintenance of good order in the Church, all church orders will be referring to the systems of church government. Systems of church government are done through assemblies. The Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of North America mentions that there are three kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies and these are the Consistory, the Classis and the Synod. In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted, and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in the minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common/general⁷⁷.

As Hanko (1962:48) says, there are three distinct matters to be treated by the church of Christ. These are as follows:

- Assemblies are limited to the treatment of ecclesiastical matters.
- Assemblies must perform their work in an ecclesiastical manner.
- Major assemblies are limited insofar as the ecclesiastical matters they deal with are concerned (Hanko 1962:48).

The argument here is that the system of church government must be mainly centred and have to do with the preaching of the gospel as its core business. The church must not involve herself in matters of social, civil, industrial, educational and political matters. It is of importance to note that major assemblies will deal with matters not finished in minor assemblies. What does this mean in church government? The Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of North

⁷⁶ Articles 2-28 give a full explanation of the offices of the minister of the Word, professors of theology, elders and deacons.

⁷⁷ The ecclesiastical assemblies are covered from Articles 29-51.

America points out clearly that matters not finished by minor assemblies are brought to the major assemblies. Matters are referred to Classis and Synod by the Consistory.

Members of the Church or Congregation have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly if he/she feels that the matter has been treated unfairly⁷⁸. Classis and Synod deliberate on matters referred to them by minor assemblies and these boards are not obliged to discuss matters concerning the minor assemblies if they have not been referred to them by the minor assemblies.

More so, those who are delegated to the major assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions, signed by their consistories or classis sending them, and only then shall they have a right to vote in all matters, except in such matters as particularly concern their persons or churches⁷⁹.

3.4.3 Church Order of the DRC⁸⁰

According to the Church Order of the DRC (2011:1) it is stated that the Dutch Reformed Church is based on the Bible as the holy and infallible Word of God. Article 1 of this Church Order continues to say the doctrine which the Church confesses in agreement with the Word of God, is expressed in the Forms of Unity as formulated at the Synod of Dordt in 1618-1619, namely the

⁷⁸ Article 31 states that if any one complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly, and whatever may be agreed upon by a majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God, or the Articles of the Church Order, as long as they are not by another Synod.

Everyone who appeals against the decision of an ecclesiastical assembly must, within one month after the date of this decision, or if he has been notified by the letter of this decision then one month after the date of such letter, advise the secretary of the Consistory in the event it concerns Consistory matters, or the calling church of the major assembly whose decision he is appealing, in case it is a matter concerning this assembly. In the event the appeal is denied, notification of this shall be sent to the applicant.

⁷⁹ Article 33 is talking about credentials of delegates.

⁸⁰ The main limitation to researcher of this thesis is that most documents of the DRC Cape which deals with the history of the RCZ are written in Afrikaans and the researcher cannot read, write and understand Afrikaans. Limited resources available are the only ones which the researcher managed to consult in dealing with the subject matter.

thirty-seven articles of the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the five Canons of Dordt.

It is significant that in the Church Order of the DRC the reformed principles are clearly formulated if we take into consideration of what is stipulated in articles 1 and 3.2. This is so because these articles mention that the Church is based on the Bible as the holy and infallible Word of God. The Church Order also mentions the Church confesses the Reformed confessions. Article 3.2 clearly states that even though there are offices in the Church, no office bearer may rule over other office bearers, since Christ is the only Head⁸¹, King and Master of his church (DRC Church Order, 2011:1).

However, when we look at the content and structure of the Church Order of the DRC it is significant that it differs from the Church Order of Dordt and other Reformed Churches. On this note the Church Order of the RCSA is referred to as noted by Vorster.

The RCSA's concept of a Church Order is clearly explained in Article 1. This summarizes the whole Church Order. Article 1 says; "To maintain good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary that there should be: offices; assemblies; supervision over doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies; and church discipline" (Vorster 1999:14). He argues that the system of Church government has grown out of Christ's rule of the church. To support his argument Vorster (1999:15) explains that; "In the Presbyterian System of church government the main principle is the rule of Christ through the Word and Spirit by means of offices". The Church Order of DRC is not in contradiction with this principle.

The Church Order of DRC is structured in 6 chapters. In addition there is a section of rules and the function of the General Synod from Rule 1-21 (DRC Church Order, 2011:49). It is significant that the Church Order of the DRC does not only state and formulate the principles of church government but it prescribe in detail a great number of practical matters of the administration of the church.

⁸¹ Vorster (1999:10) states that Christ is the King of the kingdom and Head of the people of God the Church (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 15:24-28: Eph 1;22).

One may end up asking questions such, ‘What is the Church Order? Should the Church Order prescribe rules and regulations of the Church? The Church Order of Dordt and the Church Order of RCSA mention that the Church Order is there for the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ and is it is necessary that there should be offices, assemblies; supervision over doctrine; sacrament and ceremonies; and church discipline (RCSA Church Order, 2017:2).

The Church Order of the DRC differs from the Church Order of Dordt in a way it formulated its articles because it mentions only three offices while the Church Order of Dordt and RCSA mentions four offices. The Church Order of the DRC (2011:2) is silent on the office of the professors at Theological School. The Church Order of the DRC talks of the regulations, policy and procedures and rules are included in the Church Order. A Church Order is defined by Du Plooy (1998:93) as follows:

“It is therefore significant that the classification and content of the Reformed church orders (such as that of Dordt in 1618/1619) must correspond with the kingdom of God, and thus with the hallmarks⁸² of the true church. The focus is on the proclamation of the Word, the administering of the sacraments and the exercise of the discipline in the church.”

Another point where the Church Order of DRC differs from the Church Order of Dordt (1619) is that the former has got 70 articles while the later has got 84 articles. One can conclude that some of the articles in the DRC has been transferred to the rules of the church. The Church Order of the DRC (2011:8), Chapter 4 with the heading, “The work of the Church” and Chapter 6 about “External relations of the Church” (2011:11) are not included in the Church Order of Dordt. Because of this the Church Order of DRC differs with other Church Orders of other Reformed Churches.

3.4.3.1 Ecclesiastical assemblies

The Church Order of the DRC (2011:4) mentions that there are church assemblies namely the church council, presbytery, synod and the General Synod. Another interesting issue to take note of is that in the Church Order of the DRC church assemblies are dealt with in article 18. Unlike

⁸² Hallmarks can be defined as the marks, seals, trademarks, assurances, promises or symbols.

the Church Order of the RCSA where issues of church assemblies are explained starting in article 29 of the Church Order (RCSA Church Order, 2017:24).

On a positive note the Church Order of the DRC states that these assemblies are there for the supervision, government and discipline in the Church as entrusted to them (DRC Church Order, 2011:4).

The main agenda of the ecclesiastical assemblies is described by Van Dellen and Monsma (1954:135) as follows: “It is limited to that which concerns the preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments, the calling and ordination to office, the exercise of discipline, the promotion of a consecrated scriptural church fellowship, and kindred matters”. DeMoor (2010:142) states that assemblies of the church are the council, classis and the synod. These assemblies are deliberate in nature. These assemblies are governmental bodies designed to express the rule of Christ through office-bearers says DeMoor (2010:144).

The Church Order of the DRC states that every congregation has a church council, entrusted with the supervision and discipline of the congregation. The church council consists of all the ministers of the Word as well as the elders and deacons (DRC Church Order 2011:5). This is stated in article 26 of the DRC Church Order. Because of this it shows that the DRC has deviated from the system of church government in the Reformed Churches globally. The researcher says so because the Church Order of Dordt and the Church Order of RCSA in article 37 mention that:

“In all churches there shall be a church council composed of the ministers of the Word and elders. The Church council shall meet regularly under the chairmanship of the minister, the ministers alternately if there is more than one”. There is no mentioning of the office of the deacons as members of the church council.

Furthermore, article 30 of the Church Order of the DRC (2011:5) states that the presbytery is composed of the minister(s) of the Word and one elder/deacon as delegates of the church council of every congregation within the presbytery. An elder/deacon may serve as an alternate for a minister of the Word and all delegates must provide credentials. The Church Order of the RCSA

(2017:30) in article 41 states that the classis is a meeting of neighbouring churches of which each delegates a minister and an elder.

The issue of hierarchical system⁸³ is not directly indicated in the Church Order of the DRC. However, it is significant that articles 7.1; 20.1-2 and 31:2, 7 silently promote hierarchical governance because much power is given to the presbytery and the Synod. These articles show that the autonomy of ecclesiastical assemblies is limited and the minor assemblies will remain subordinate to the major assemblies in issues of church government. One can ask a question that where is the authority of the assemblies. It is definite that the authority of the church resides in broader assemblies such as the General Synod. The activities of the presbytery is to supervise/policing the congregations (Cf. DRC Church Order 2011:5).

The Church Order of the DRC shows that it has deviated from the original Church Order of Dordt which was formulated in 1618-1619. This is so because the numbering of articles of the DRC Church Order and the Church Order of Dordt is no longer in agreement. The content is also in disagreement. Deacons are not mentioned as delegates to represent the presbytery in the Church Order of Dordt and the Church Order of the RCSA (RCSA Church Order, 2017:30).

Article 38 of the Church Order of the DRC mentions that the deacons can represent their respective synods as delegates at the General Synod. The Church Order of the DRC has got 70 articles and after the articles there is another section for rules functioning of the General Synod. In this section the duties of the Moderamen are dealt with (DRC Church Order, 2011:13). The decision of the DRC to have a system of government which is administered by the Moderamen on a daily basis is contrary to the principles of church government in the Reformed Churches. It is clear that their government system is no longer adhering in some important aspects to the reformed principles. By mandating the Moderamen in the sense that the Moderator and the rest of the Moderamen remain in office after the assembly has closed means that the DRC has

⁸³ In Article 7.1 the approval of the presbytery is needed for a minister of the Word who have been called by the congregation. Article 20.2 states that the authority of the presbytery, according to its nature and function, over the church council is the same as that of the synod and the General, according to their nature and function, over the other church structure.

deviated from the reformed principle of church government as this is not found in the Church Order of Dordt (1618-1619) and other Church Orders of the Reformed Churches.

Because of this kind of Church Order of the DRC⁸⁴ being used as the yardstick by the RCZ in the formulation of their Church Order led to a major shift of what is expected in the church order if we are to compare it with the Church Order of Dordt. Rutoro (2007:91-92) notes that the DRC of the Cape were using the mission-board type of church government. This is so because they were not willing to separate the administration of the mission stations and the congregation. It is my assumption as researcher that the deviation on the RCZ in system of church government was a replica of what was already done by the DRC Cape. Against this background the Church order of the DRC in the Cape proves that at the time the RCZ was instituted an autonomous church had already introduced permanent offices and presbytery and synod level (Cf. Van der Merwe, 1981:124-125). White ministers were the only ministers who held positions in the Presbytery Executive committee since the establishment of the Presbytery between 1918 and 1952 (Rutoro 2007:95). The system of church government in the RCZ has got its origin from the Church Order of the DRC which has shown some deviation from the Church Order of Dordt and that of the RCSA in both the salutation and the sequential numbering of the articles.

I have noted the issue of the institution of the RCZ in this section only to prove that the Church Order of the DRC had an influence on the system of church government in the RCZ till to date. More so it is significant that the Church Order of the DRC does not only state and formulate the principles of church government but it also prescribe in detail a great number of practical matters. This can also be regarded as a major deviation on the system of church government because it is not the task of the Church Order to explain the day to day running of the Church.

Furthermore, it shows that DRC as Church has given much power to the Presbytery and the General synod as is prescribed in articles 20 and 35 of the DRC Church Order. The self-governance of the local church is violated. This kind of deviation from the system of reformed

⁸⁴ Though it is not within the scope of my research to evaluate the Church Order of the DRC in depth. I gave my attention to the Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church only in so far as it is relevant and important background because of the main focus of my research namely the Church government system of the RCZ.

church government lead the church council to be a subordinate or inferior of the major assemblies.

Article 44 of the DRC Church Order (2011:7) deals with the procedure to be followed by church councils when deciding on a change to the confessional basis of the Dutch Reformed Church in order to obtain the approval and approbation of at least a two-thirds majority of professing members of the congregations for the decision. Is this relevant to Article 1 of this same Church Order? It is significant that the Church Order states that church is based on the Bible meaning that even their decision should be scriptural guided. The issue of majority vote is used in Collegialism government. Vorster (1999:12-13) declares that in classis, regional synod, and general synods which are seen or regarded as independent higher meetings, each as a legal entity, majority of votes and not the Biblical principles determines the decisions of councils. The Church order must be based on the Bible as the Word of God and the Confessions as is stated in Article 1.

Lastly is the issue of the functioning of the General Synod. The authority of the Moderamen undermines the authority of other assemblies. The office of the moderator as mentioned in Rule 1 of the DRC Church Order (2011:13) where the election, representation and responsibilities of the Moderamen is explained. In the Church Order of Dort there is no mentioning of offices such as presbytery executive and Moderamen remaining in the office and having authority after the assembly is concluded. The problem with this is that a moderator and the rest of the Moderamen can be elected for more than one term consecutively and have authority between synods. The RCSA Church Order, article 35 states that at major assemblies a minister of the Word shall preside over the meeting. The task of the chairman is to state and explain the agenda to be dealt with, to ensure that everyone awaits his turn to speak, to silence anyone who is quarrelsome or speaks too vehemently, and to discipline him suitably if he persist. His office shall cease when the assembly is concluded (RCSA Church Order, 2017:26).

The issue of executive committees such as Moderamen in major assemblies like the General Synod in the DRC Church Order differs with other Church Order of the Reformed Churches. In other Reformed Churches the office the moderator or chairperson of the Synod expires when the

session of the said meeting is adjourned. The research is not aimed at exhausting all articles in the Church Order of the DRC but we referred to certain articles by way of examples.

In conclusion we have noted that the Church of the DRC is in agreement with other church orders in the principles of church government through the confessions and accepting that Christ is the Head of the church and he governs it through the Word and his Spirit. This does not mean that the other deviations in the principles of church government can be ignored. If they are not attended to, they will compromise the principles of church government.

3.4.4 Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa

The Reformed Churches in South Africa implemented the system of church government from the Church Order of Dordrecht 1618/1619 though some changes were made. Article 1 of the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, reads as follows: “To maintain good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary that there should be offices, assemblies, and supervision over doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and church discipline. According to the same Church Order, Article 2 mentions that there are four types of offices, namely the minister of the Word, professors at Theological school, elders and deacons.

Article 29, of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, deals with the church assemblies, and the following kinds of church assemblies are mentioned: these are the church council, classis, regional synod and general synod. The system of church government of the Reformed Churches in South Africa is more or less similar to that of the Church Order of Dort. They only differ in names but their ways of administering things are almost the same.

As Vorster (1999:50) says, Article 30 of the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, states the same issue, viz. that Church assemblies shall deal only with ecclesiastical matters and shall do so in an ecclesiastical manner. More so the major assemblies shall deal only with matters that could not be finalized in minor assemblies or that concern all churches in question, collectively.

The Reformed Churches in South Africa does not have the office of the moderator which runs for a fixed period as it is done in the RCZ. This is so because Article 35, of their Church Order clearly states that, at major assemblies a minister of the Word shall preside over the meeting. The task of the chairman, meaning the minister of the Word who is presiding over the meeting, is to state the agenda of the meeting and to preside over the discussion of the agenda. His office or his chairmanship shall cease when the assembly or the meeting is concluded. In the RCZ, from the presbytery assemblies to the synod assembly, the chairperson has a term of office which is renewable based on performance. *Bhuku yoMurairo* of the RCZ (2017:14) states that the Executive of the presbytery which is referred to as the Classis in other reformed churches and Dutch Reformed Churches outside Zimbabwe, shall be elected every two years.

At major assemblies such as the synod, in the RCZ, the moderator who chairs the meeting has a term which runs for four years and is renewable for another term of two years. This resolution was passed at a synod meeting which was held in 2016 at Morgenster mission, Masvingo province (Synod Minutes, 2016:97). The system of the RCZ's church government differs from that of the Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Netherlands because the latter do not have a fixed term of office.

The church council in the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa is made up of the minister of the Word and the elders, who have to meet regularly under the chairmanship of the minister or his alternative colleague (Article 37). Deacons may only be considered to form part of the church council by way of local arrangement; this shall only apply in cases where there are fewer than three elders (Article 38).

Article 40 deals with the office of the deacons who are obliged to meet regularly and their meeting must start with the Word or prayer. They are assigned to deal with matters pertaining to their office. When their meetings are in session the ministers of the Word shall watch carefully over the way they are managing the finances of the congregation. If the minister of the Word feels that it is necessary for him to attend the meeting of deacons, he is free to do so without any restriction.

In the Reformed Churches of South Africa when they have their classis meetings (hereby referred to as the presbytery meeting in the RCZ), various ministers will preside over the classis in rotation. Article 41 states that one minister cannot preside over meetings of the classis twice in succession. Secondly the venue and time of the next meeting of the classis is determined at each meeting. If the congregation does not have a minister of the Word, it must send two elders to represent their church council (RCSA Church Order, 2017:30).

The chairman must inquire to see whether the congregations have meetings of a church council, which exercises church discipline, takes care of the poor and he should verify whether the congregations require the assistance of the classis in its proper management. Another duty of the classis is to choose delegates who will represent their classis at the regional synod. Those who are to attend the regional synod are chosen by the classis, not by the church council (RCSA Church Order, Article 41). This is not the case with the RCZ because those who are to represent the church at the presbytery or at the synod assemblies are chosen by their respective congregations (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:35).

All the church orders discussed above shows that in their preambles if not all they subscribe to the Church Order of Dort (1619). The system of church government in all these churches originated from the Church Order of Dort, therefore the RCZ's system of church government must be a copyright of other Reformed Churches.

3.5 Major assemblies

The major assemblies of the Reformed Churches of South Africa are the classis, regional synod and the general synod. Article 46 of the Church Order states that, matters to be dealt with in major assemblies shall/should not be prepared for discussion until the decisions of the previous synods regarding these matters have been studied, in order that matters which had already been finalized, would not be tabled again unless it was considered necessary to review such matters (Article 46).

It is stated in Article 47 that the regional synod is an assembly of neighbouring classes, to which each classis delegates an equal number of ministers of the Word and elders as determined by the

regional synod. The regional synod in the Reformed Churches of South Africa meets annually unless there are pressing issues ... in which case, then at least two classes must request for an extraordinary regional synod to be called (Article 47).

Contrary to this, the RCZ, as mentioned earlier, has delegates elected to the synod and recommended by the church council, not by the classis, as is done in South Africa (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:35). The synod sits every two years and when the synod is not in session the synodical committee shall sit on behalf of the synod. In the RCZ the synodical committee⁸⁵ stands in as the regional synod in South Africa.

The major assemblies in the Reformed Churches in South Africa appoint the deputies to implement the resolutions of the meeting according to the explicit instructions. The deputies shall keep a proper record of all their activities so as to report back to the major assembly which had appointed them to be in those offices. In the RCZ, the Actuary is the office-bearer who is elected at presbytery assembly and synod assembly to monitor policy implementation of all the resolutions of their respective meetings (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:37).

According to the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (Article 50) the national synod is an assembly of all regional synods (or the minor assemblies concerned) to which each regional synod delegates an equal number of the minister of the Word and elders as recommended by the national synod. The general synod in South Africa meets every three years unless there are at least two or more burning issues to be discussed. Because of these regional synods' request an extraordinary general synod meeting can be called for (Article 50).

The general synod determines a Code of Missions as stated in (Article 51). The Dutch Reformed Church and the RCSA only meet through the deputies in the so-called *Tussenkerklike Raad* and *Coventus*. After discussing these different church orders of the Reformed Churches worldwide,

⁸⁵ The synodical committee is made up of one minister of the Word and an elder representing each presbytery. They also have their alternative colleague in case they are absent. The synod executive known as the moderature are members of the synodical committee. The synodical committee sits three times annually. They deliberate on issues referred by the presbytery. However, all issues which deal with policy and doctrinal beliefs are referred to the Doctrinal and Research committee which, after doing thorough research, will also refer its findings to the Synod when it is in session.

one can conclude that the background of all these Church Orders originated at the Synod of Dort. The systems of government of the Reformed/Presbyterian church government started from the church council also known as consistory, presbytery also referred to as classis, regional synod, national synod and general synod. With all these boards or councils, one might ask who the officers are who operate in these councils. In order for this question to be answered correctly, the researcher must discuss the officers in the church according to the system of church government in the Reformed churches.

3.5.1 Officers of the Church.

In this section, attention will be given to the Reformed/Presbyterian system of church government to see the duties bestowed on the officers of the church. These officers are the ministers of the Word, elders and deacons. This section will not discuss these offices as is explained in the Bible because the biblical foundation of church offices will be dealt with in the next chapter of this research.

Attention of this study will be given to different church orders. An evaluation of different church orders of different denominations of the Reformed tradition is to be consulted because they all have their origin in the Church Order of the Synod of Dort, 1618-1619.

It is held that Offices in the church are of divine institution, which means that they cannot be changed or multiplied willingly (Harvey 1982:66).

The offices to be discussed here are referred to as ordinary officers. Vorster (1999:15) states that offices in the church are instruments in the hands of Christ through which He institutes, conserves and builds the Church. These are the office of the minister of the Word, professors at the Theological School, elders and deacons. According to Vorster (1999:16) it is argued that the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa acknowledges the office of the professor of Theology as the fourth office in the ministry. DeMoor (2010:20) acknowledges that the church recognizes the office of minister of the Word, elder, deacon and the ministry associate. These offices differ from each other only in mandate and task, not in dignity and

honour. These would be ministers of the Word with a special appointment of teaching in Theological Schools where future ministers of the Word are trained. Pali (2018:6) says:

“Leadership in the Church refers mainly to the minister, elders, and deacons who together form the church council of a congregation”.

Brink and De Ridder (1979:103) note that the elders with the minister of the Word shall have supervision over the congregation and their fellow office-bearers. They shall exercise supervision and discipline and to see that everything is done in order. Elders and ministers of the Word shall exercise pastoral care over the congregation, and engage in and promote the work of evangelism in the congregation. The elders, with ministers of the Word shall maintain good order by doing the following tasks:

- Providing an edifying liturgy for public worship
- Maintaining good order in worship service
- Following sound rules of procedure in consistory meetings
- Keeping and preserving accurate files: minute books, treasurer’s records, membership records
- Including essential elements of the work of the congregation in consistory
- Formulating and following clear rules for committees and functionaries in the congregation

Dealing with problems in an orderly and Christian manner (Brink & De Ridder, 1979:105).

3.5.1.1 Minister of the Word

Article 3 of the RCSA Church Order, in the book of Vorster (1999:17) declares that; “No person shall be permitted to proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments unless he has been lawfully called to do so and has been admitted to the office”.

It is Christ’s task/privilege to call different people to serve in different and various ministries in His Church, and hence ministers of the Word are also called to serve in such a way.

In the Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of North America⁸⁶, it is stated that the task of the minister of the Word is to continue in prayer and in the ministry of the Word, to administer the sacraments, to watch over the elders and deacons, as well as the congregation, and finally, together with the elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done in good order.

The calling and admission of a person into the ministry of the Word must go through various stages which comprise of the following, according to Article 4:

Firstly, after prayers have been said, the election by the church council and deacons takes place, or as determined by the church council; and, in churches with only one minister, with the advice of the classis or the relieving minister appointed for this purpose;

Secondly, examination by the classis into the doctrine and life of a person to be called, which shall involve the advice of the deputies appointed by the regional synod;

Thirdly, approbation and approval by the members of the church in question, which implies that legitimate objection was lodged after the name of the person to be called, had been announced in the church for at least three Sundays;

Finally, the public ordination of the person in the presence of the congregation and of the deputies of the classis according to the prescribed form for this purpose (Vorster 1999:18).

In the RCZ there seems to be a slight difference in the way in which a minister of the Word is called. *RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:42) states that the congregation must know that ministers are called by God to do his ministry. It is the duty of the church council with the guidance of the alternate⁸⁷ minister within the same presbytery who should sit and call a minister of the Word through balloting, since lobbying for one to be called is not permitted. After three weeks the

⁸⁶ Article 16 of the Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of North America which was republished in 2004 by the Publications Committee.

⁸⁷ Alternate minister is sometimes referred as relieving or visiting minister. He/she is a minister of a nearby congregation and act as a minister of a vacant congregation.

minister, who was called, must reply whether he/she is to accept or deny the call. If the one called, is from the Theological School he/she will be ordained by the Actuary of the Church in liaison with the Presbytery.

After ordination, according to the prescribed form the newly- ordained or inducted minister must do a handover/ takeover with the alternate minister (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:45).

According to Vorster (1999: 26), the church council which represents the church, is the one which must support the minister of the Word financially. The RCZ does the same although the church council does not pay the minister of the Word directly; it has to remit its allocated budget to the Central Fund which is administered by the Church Treasurer. In the RCZ, ministers of the Word are remunerated directly from the Central Office (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:59).

As stated above, the services of a minister of the Word are directly linked to the local congregation though he might be invited to preach in other congregations, but it must be done with the consent of the local church council (Vorster 1999:32). The duties or responsibilities of a minister of the Word in a congregation are to persevere in prayers, to proclaim the Word, to administer sacraments, as well as to attend to and oversee his fellow ministers, elders, and deacons and other church members. Together with elders and deacons they form a church council which administers church discipline of the church and ensures that everything in the church takes place in an orderly and proper and transparent manner (Vorster 1999:32 and (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:30-31).

The system of church government in the Reformed churches do not load everything onto the minister of the Word alone, but has to work hand- in- hand with other officers. The minister of the Word is the chairperson of the church council. In the RCZ, the minister of the Word must do house visitation, solemnize marriages, and tend to funerals and counsel the bereaved (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:31).

Janssen (2006:209) argues that the office of the minister of the Word is not the only thing about the church; it is not even the most important thing because the most important thing is all about

the kingdom of God. When a minister of the Word is doing his/her ministry everything being done must be Christ-centred and it should be kingdom preaching.

He also believes that the office of the minister of the Word is rooted in the congregation, so, therefore, the minister, like any other office in the church, is elected, called and ordained within the congregation, as if by God's own action (Janssen, 2006:227).

According to Bouwman (2000:56-57), the tasks of the minister of the Word is to shepherd, to be a steward, to lead and to teach the flock of God. He must do all these tasks through using the Word of God and that is why they are referred to as teaching elders.

The minister of the Word plays an important role just like the office of elder and deacon in the system of church government to complement other offices for the edification of the congregation. Truly it was and it will still remain relevant in the system of church government in the Reformed Churches worldwide and in the RCZ. However, this does not mean that it is the most important office amongst other offices in the system of church government.

Bouwman (2000:59) admits that the tasks of a minister of the Word's may receive a changed emphasis when one receives a special mandate such as being appointed for the training of students for the ministry. This calling is referred to by others as the professor for the Theological School (Vorster 1999:15). It also asserts that ministers of the Word might be called to be missionaries. Bouwman (2000:59) maintains that when one is called to become a missionary, one will remain a minister of the Word, for one will continue to perform the same duties. It is noted that on the mission field too sinners are saved through the preaching and hearing the Word of God being preached by the missionaries.

Hence, the principal task of the missionaries is to preach the gospel of reconciliation through Christ and for this reason a missionary will remain the minister of the Word sent by the local church where he was ordained with the sole responsibility of preaching the Word.

The office of the professor of the Theological School is regarded as an office but basically it is good and appropriate to refer to it as ministry. This means that one assigned to this responsibility

will remain the minister of the Word. The professor is ordained or inducted in the local church where he lives and maintains the status and privileges of a minister. He is simultaneously a minister of all the churches, with a particular appointment (Vorster 1999:37).

The minister of the Word in the Reformed Churches worldwide is the chairperson or overseer of all church council meetings, be it with the congregation, or at classis, regional synod, national synod and general synod. However, this does not mean that the minister of the Word is more powerful than other officers such as the elders and deacons. Their tasks are that of caring for the believers and supervision of the church council. The system of church government in the Reformed Churches gives preference to the ministers of the Word to be the chairperson of all ecclesiastical council meetings.

In conclusion, the main task of the teaching elder or the minister of the Word is to oversee, shepherd, to be stewards over and lead the congregation in a way that is pleasing and directing the whole congregation to God through Jesus Christ who is the Head of the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. The minister of the Word does not fulfil this mission of God alone but is complemented by the elders and deacons. Now attention will be directed to the office of the ruling elder.

3.5.1.2 The office of the ruling elder

The office of the ruling elder does not fall under the clergy⁸⁸ but it falls under the laity⁸⁹. Similar terms such as overseer, shepherd, steward, elder and leader also apply to the office of the ruling elder. Vischer (1990:18) mentions that elders have particular responsibility for the oversight in relation to the whole life, mission and service of the Christian community.

⁸⁸ Clergy derives its meaning from a Greek word *kleros* 'a lot' which points to method of selection like that which is found in Acts 1:26. The term clergy denotes regular members of the ordained ministry such as bishops, priests, and pastors (Elwell, 1984:254).

⁸⁹ Laity refers to the whole people of God. Historically it was used to refer to people who are not specifically ordained to the ministry.

Bouwman (2000:58) argues that these terms differ in the way in which the tasks of the ruling elder and teaching elders are described in different denominations.

Vorster (1999:40) explains the office of the elders as follows:

“Elders are elected by the congregation under the guidance of the church council according to the customary local procedure or as determined by the church council. Each church council may offer church members the opportunity to direct the attention to able persons before election. The church council, with deacons, may present the required number of elders to the church members for approbation, present them as a list of names from which one should be elected in each case, or present a list of names from which the congregation may elect the required number. After their names have been announced on several occasions and no legal objection has been lodged, the elected brothers are ordained according to the form prescribed for this purpose.

The procedure applying to elders must also be observed in the election, approval and ordination of deacons⁹⁰”.

The above statement shows that Christ, as the Head of the church, rules it by means of elders as governors of the church through His guidance. In the RCZ, the election of elders is done by the congregation. Each section, ward or preaching- post must elect two names from members of the section and submit them to the church council, who in turn votes for one person among the two names submitted to them. The one who wins with the majority vote will be inducted by the minister of the Word as an elder (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:28).

The church’s responsibilities include some of the tasks found in the office of the minister of the Word. The elders must exercise the necessary supervision of the minister of the Word, their fellow elders and see to it that deacons also conduct their office faithfully. Elders should do house visitation, as a way of comforting the bereaved, to instruct congregants to live a life that is pleasing to God. Another task of the elders is to evangelise other people who are not yet Christians to believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour (Article 23).

⁹⁰ Article 22 and 24 from the book authored by J. M. Vorster, “An Introduction to Reformed Church Polity published in 1999 in South Africa.

In the Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of North America, Article 23 states the following words about the office of the elder:

“The office of the elder, besides what was stated in Article 16⁹¹ is to take heed that the ministers, together with their fellow- elders and deacons, faithfully discharge their office and as much as possible visit families of the congregation in order to comfort and instruct the members and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian faith”.

The office of the minister of the Word and that of the elder are closely related or linked together, which means that they work hand- in- hand. The teaching elders perform the duty of the ministry, which is preaching the Word and administering sacraments while the ruling elders perform the duty of church government (Vorster, 1999:43).

Monsma (1967:97-100) mentions that the duties of elders in the congregation are that of supervision of the members, supervision of the fellow office-bearers, exercise of pastoral care and they shall engage in and promote evangelism. In the same note tasks of the office of the elder are summarized by Vorster (1999:44) in the following points:

To supervise the ministry of the Word and Sacraments (Acts 20:28-31). For this purpose the elder himself must be a student of the Word.

To supervise the life, work and doctrinal viewpoints of all the other office-bearers in the church. The lifestyle and doctrinal viewpoints of a minister, elder and deacon cannot be separated. They are inextricably linked (1 Tim 3:17).

To build up the congregation and the personal faith of the believers by means of house visitation. This is one of the most important aspects of the life of the church. The house visitation of the elder is linked with the sacrament of the Holy Communion. This is not without reason. The Holy Communion obliges the believer to a re-evaluation of his faith and life. The elder should assist him in this process. He should lead the believer back to Christ by way of instruction in the Word of God. A church council must organise the

⁹¹ Article 16: The task of ministers is to faithfully lead in prayer, preach the Word and administer the sacraments. They shall watch over their fellow office-bearers and over the congregation. Together with the elders, they shall exercise church discipline and see to it that everything is done decently and in good order

practice of house visitation according to the circumstances in their particular congregation in such a way that all the above- mentioned principles are adhered to.

To evangelise people to accept the Christian faith. Evangelisation is the basic task of the church (Matt 28:19-20). This is not only the duty of the minister of the Word, but of every believer. This task is especially emphasized in the exposition of the duties of the elder. The important aspect of the work of the elder is largely neglected in the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) as is for example evident in the explanations of various authors of church polity

To fulfil the duties described in article 23 of the Church Order of RCSA with regard to the execution of church discipline and the maintenance of good order in the church. The principle and practical guidelines of the church discipline will be discussed in the explanation of articles 71-81 (Vorster 1999:44).

The task of governing is emphasized in Paul's first letter to Timothy (1 Tim 5:17), where the passage speaks of elders "who rule". The primary focus is on pastoral care and discipline (Bouwman, 2000:59).

The Rules and Regulations of the RCZ (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:31) run in the same vein as that held by Vorster (1999:44) for it mentions that the task of the elder is to supervise the life, work and doctrinal teachings within the congregation and that of the minister of the Word. Elders should support the minister of the Word by doing house visitation and doing evangelisation to people who have not yet received Christ as their personal Saviour.

The Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of North America, explicitly states that the term of office of the elder is that he shall serve for two or more years according to the local congregation's regulations. A proportionate number shall retire each year, and those who have retired will be succeeded by others. Likewise in the RCZ, an elder shall serve for two years and he/she can be re-elected for another term of two years. After serving for four years one has to retire for a minimum of one year or more before seeking re-election back into office (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:29). The researcher is referring to the Church Orders of different countries worldwide because this dogmatic research is undertaken in a Reformed tradition perspective (Acodesin 2018:2).

Vorster (1999: 47) says:

The period of service for elders and deacons shall be determined by the church council in the best interest of the particular church. In the case of the periodical retirement after at least two years, the same proportionate number of office-bearers must retire annually

The minister of the Word and the elders form the church council, and it shall meet regularly under the chairmanship of the minister of the Word⁹². If there are a small number of elders, deacons may be considered to form part of the church council by way of local arrangement; this shall apply in cases where there are fewer than three elders⁹³.

The RCZ's composition of the church council is that of the minister of the Word, elders and deacons. The system of church government differs from that of the Reformed Churches of South Africa because in the latter deacons may attend the church council by way of co-option whilst in the RCZ they are full members of the Church council.

3.5.1.3 The office of the deacon

The roots of the office of the deacon in the Church Order of the Netherlands is found in the Bible in the New Testament where the word 'deacon' is mentioned in various passages, such as Philippians 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13 and Acts 6:2-7 (Bouwman 2000:40 & Baloyi 2016:79).

According to the Church Order of the Free Reformed Churches of North America, article 24, it is stated that deacons shall be chosen and installed in the same manner as that concerning elders in article 22⁹⁴.

On the other hand Vorster (1999:45) adds that:

⁹² Article 37 of the Reformed Churches of South Africa.

⁹³ Article 38 of the Reformed Churches of South Africa

⁹⁴Article 22, The elders are chosen from a nomination made by the consistory and the deacons, with the assistance of the congregation, in such a way that double the number to be chosen are presented to the congregation. After those chosen have been appointed and approved, they shall be installed with public prayers, and stipulations agreeable to the Form of this purpose.
According to the principle involved, re-elected officers should be re-installed.

The essence of the office of the deacon is conscientiously to collect the money and goods given to the poor as gifts of love and to distribute these gifts of love diligently, after joint deliberation, according to the needs of both the needy and other church members. It is also their duty to visit and comfort those in need and to ensure that the gifts are not wrongly applied. The deacons must report to the church council about their activities and, if so desired, to the congregation, as well, when the church council considers it appropriate.

This is supported by what is said in the Church Order of the Reformed Churches of North America, article 25 which says:

The office peculiar to the deacons is to diligently collect moneys and other contributions of charity, and after the mutual counsel, to faithfully and diligently distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort the distressed and to exercise care that the alms are not misused, of which they shall render an account to the consistory and to the congregation, at such time as the Consistory may see fit.

According to Vorster (1999:46), the Church Order emphasizes the following main duties of the deacons in material and spiritual matters:

The collection of contributions to the poor.

The distribution of these contributions.

To act communally to prevent injustice and disorderliness.

To do house visitation with the sole purpose of comforting those in need with the Word of God and to inspire Christians to take care of the needy.

To report to the church council and, if necessary, to the congregation about their work.

To work not only in the congregation but for all in need (Gal 6:10).

Deacons, as written in the Book of the Church Order of the RCA (1983:15), must take charge of all alms contributed for the benefit of the poor and distribute these with discretion. The board of deacons is responsible for visiting and comforting the sick, the distressed and those in material need (Baloyi, 2016:84).

Hanko (1962:40), Brink (1987:13), Meeter (1993:70), Borgdorff (2008:113) and the Church Order and its supplements of the Reformed Church in North America (2012:45) all agree that the office of the deacon was solely founded to diligently collect the offerings and all contributions toward charity and, after mutual counsel, faithfully and diligently distribute the same to those in need. The deacons likewise must visit, comfort the distressed and exercise care so that alms should not be misused.

Deacons embody God here on earth by doing the diaconal work of showing justice and mercy to all people as instructed by the Lord Jesus Christ (Janssen 2006:205; Baloyi 2016:84).

The duty of deacons in their work is to reflect that God wants the disadvantaged people in society to continue with life like all other people. Deacons can perform other duties that they may be assigned to by the consistory from time to time (Baloyi 2016:84).

Janssen (2006:208) states that the office of the deacon exists in the congregation with its face turned toward the world, whilst on the other hand, it is eschatologically located in the Kingdom of God. Moreover, Janssen (2006:209) summarises this by saying “the congregation through the office of the deacon is directed to the needs of the world and participates, through the offering, in doing God’s work of mercy and justice to those in need”.

In the RCZ deacons are members of the Church Council and they are also members of the finance committee which oversee the income and expenditure of all finances of the congregation (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:58 & 59). Much of this will be discussed at length in chapter 5 of this study. This will help us to see the relevance of the government system of the RCZ.

The systems of church government seem to differ regarding the inclusion of deacons in the church council of the Reformed Churches and the RCZ but on the other hand there are similarities in the tasks or duties of the office of deacons in the congregation.

3.5.1.4 Election and Term of office

Unlike the minister of the Word, elders and deacons shall be elected from members of the congregation and those elected must be full communicants, who have at least attained the age of

twenty-one years. After election, those elected will be announced during Sunday services for three consecutive Sundays at their place of worship (*Book of Church Order of the RCA* 1983:17-18). On the issue of age in the RCZ, for one to qualify for the election one should have been a full communicant for at least a year in the said congregation. Those to be elected to the office of deacons must be at least twenty-five years old and those to be elected in the office of the elder must have attained the age of thirty years or more, whether male or female (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:28).

Deacons, as well as elders in the Reformed Church in America, shall be elected for a term not to exceed five years. It is argued that election of office-bearers shall be conducted every year in order to avoid an entire change of all elders and deacons (Baloyi 2016:85). On the other hand, the elders and deacons must serve for a term of two years, renewable for another two years to make them four years. Thereafter, one has to rest for a year before seeking re-election (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:29).

The congregation, which is the representative of God here on earth, is the one which is mandated to choose elders and deacons of the church, says Janssen (2006:176). It is Christ, the Head of the Church who calls and elects officers of the Church. Furthermore, the congregation does not only participate in the election, but also prays on behalf of the church officers so that they will be in a position to execute their duties well in the community and different societies during their term of office (Baloyi 2016:86).

3.5.1.5 Equality of Church officers

The Church Order of the Reformed Churches of Australia (2000:84) discusses the issue of equality amongst church officers quite intensively, so that one officer shall not lord it over another. Article 22 in the above-mentioned Church Order articulates the issue of priesthood of believers, indicating that there is equality amongst church officers and even amongst members of the congregation.

Describing the issue of priesthood of all believers Kung (1968:370 & 371) mentions the Church as the people of God, the Church as the body of Christ, the Church as a spiritual building, and

the Church as the temple of the Holy Spirit. With the new dispensation of the new covenant, Christ as the Head of the Church is the high priest and the mediator, and because of this no- one is superior to any other member of the church.

Article 84, of the Reformed Churches of South Africa argues that no church, minister of the Word, elder or deacon shall in any way dominate other churches, ministers, elders or deacons respectively. The church council is formed by ministers, elders and deacons serving in congregations whilst the classis is formed by delegated office-bearers of the Church council of the congregations belonging to the classis (Baloyi 2016:93).

The church council directs the life and work of the congregation. The classis ecclesiastical assembly directs the life and work of the classis and by doing so, the classis expresses the responsibility of the congregations for one another and for the entire Church, as well as the responsibility of the Church to the said congregations, says Baloyi (2016:93).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter was an evaluation of the historical development of the doctrine of church government since the inception of the Synod of Dort in 1618-1619. This will help the researcher to come up with a proper conclusion to see if the system of church government of the RCZ is still in line with the teachings of the doctrine of church government in the Reformed tradition.

The evaluation of the ecclesiastical development of church government used the teachings which were adopted at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) as the blueprint in formulating a system of church government of the Reformed Churches worldwide, and the RCZ is not spared. The Church is the body of Christ who is the Head, and he is the one who ordained the offices as instruments to govern His Church through the use of church officers who form various ecclesiastical assemblies, such as church council (consistory), classis (presbyteries), regional synod, national synod and general synod.

In this evaluation, the researcher has discovered that in the church government system there is no hierarchical powers but the office- bearers complement one another because of the issue of the

priesthood of all believers. More so the ecclesiastical assemblies work hand- in- hand with the local assembly towards the major assemblies. Furthermore there is equality of church officers: the office of the minister of the Word is ordained for life whilst the office of the elders and deacons serves for a limited time and is to be succeeded by others.

The evaluation of the historical development of the system of church government since the Synod of Dort of 1618 and 1619 in this chapter provided an excellent model to be followed by the RCZ in her system of church government. This will help the RCZ not to deviate from the theological understanding of the system of church government,

Chapter 4 aims to evaluate the teachings of the Bible along the models or systems of church government in comparison with that of the RCZ. The objective is to come up with the systems of church government founded in the Bible that will enhance the church government of the RCZ.

CHAPTER 4: THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed and showed the historical development of the system of church government from the Reformation period to the present time. Also the government systems which originated from the Church Order of Dort such as the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, America and Reformed Churches of South Africa were discussed systematically. This chapter aims to answer the research question:

“What does the Bible teach about the doctrine of church government?”

In the process of trying to answer this question the researcher will be aiming to meet the following research objective:

“To identify biblical principles in the system of church government of the RCZ.”

In this chapter, exegesis of the Scriptures is used to answer the research question which is What, according to the Bible, should be going on in the government system of the RCZ so that it will remain relevant to the teachings of the Reformed tradition?

Passages such as Acts 15; 20:28-35, 1 Timothy 5:17, Ephesians 4:11-12, Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3:1-13 will be considered for this research. The reviews of relevant literature will be studied as a way of expounding the subject matter further

According to Ndlovu (2018:162) this process of study aims to identify the theological relevance of church government as it is presented in the Scriptures. The literature review of different Bibles verses are evaluated and scrutinized so that the research will draw biblical guidelines for church government systems.

As stated in Chapter 1, Section 1:10.4, this study will start by explaining what the church is as it is described in the Bible; the researcher will start by addressing that question.

4.2 The nature of the Church

According to Erickson (1998:330), the Greek word used in the New Testament for the church is *ecclesia* which refers to the assembly of the citizens of a city. The word “church” in the New Testament has got two meanings: On the one hand it denotes all believers in Christ at all times and places. On the other hand the word “church” refers to a group of believers in a given geographical area. (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1) The church is the kingdom of Christ, subject to his rule says Reed (2009:6)

The nature of the church is described in the biblical images of the church. When we say the biblical images of the church we are talking about the merits or characteristics which point to the true church of God (Erickson 1998:331). There are a number of images which are used in the Bible to refer to the church.

4.2.1 The Church as the people God

Kung’s (1962:107) basic argument about the church as the people of God indicates more than a sect of the Jews who believed in the Messiah and with a particular creed. This was the same argument held by Erickson (1998:331) where he asserts that the church is the chosen people of God, meaning that these chosen people belong to God and He belongs to them. Apostle Paul wrote that God said:

“I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people” (2 Cor. 6:16)⁹⁵.

⁹⁵ The concept of the church as the people of God emphasizes God’s initiative in choosing the people. This started well back in the Old Testament where God created a people for himself. He chose Abraham and then, through him, brought into being the people of Israel. Furthermore in the New Testament, this concept of God’s choosing people is broadened to include both Jews and Gentiles within the church (Erickson 1998:331).

The people of God also refers the Covenant which is the central theme in the Bible.

According to Erickson (1998:331), God was proud of Israel and the church as the people of God because He was the one who was taking care of, protecting and keeping His eyes on them always (Deut. 32:10) Migliore (2004:252) asserts the same when he maintains that one set of images of the church points on the description of the church as the people of God. He refers to it as the "exodus" people of God. The Church is not static but on a mission, and therefore, the RCZ's system of church government should be evaluated in the concept of an exodus church.

The church as the people of God should bear in mind that it is composed of servant people who are there to serve God who is the Creator. The book of Exodus (8:1; 9:1; 10:1) shows that God's call for the liberation of the people of Israel had the sole purpose of serving Him⁹⁶ (Migliore 2004:253).

According to Frame (2013:1021), the church is referred to as the family of God and this figure stresses the intimacy of life in the church. By doing this we will be acknowledging that as Christians we are brothers and sisters, God our father. Jesus is our elder brother says Frame (2013:1021).

It is prudent in every Church to know that the sole purpose of the church through its system of church government is to serve God. As the RCZ, the office-bearers, and members of the church all should know they are the people of God who have been liberated to serve Him wholeheartedly without any reservation. The RCZ church leaders must be exemplary in the system of the church government since they are servants of God who have been liberated through the death of Jesus Christ to serve God by leading his people in a subservient way. Leaders of God's church are not masters, but servants. Theologically, in any system of church government, leaders are there to serve the people of God which is the church, and not to be served themselves.

⁹⁶ The phrase which is repeatedly in these three chapters of the book of Exodus is, "that they may serve me".

In his book, *“Faith Seeking Understanding”*, Migliore (2004:253) says: “The theme of servant people is no less important in the New Testament. Just as the Lord of this community is a servant Lord, so the community called by God is to be a community of servants”. “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

4.2.2 The Church as the Body of Christ

The Church in the New Testament is in some instances referred to as the body of Christ. This description of the church is commonly found in the letters of Paul (also known as the Pauline letters), like 1 Cor. 12:12-31 (Migliore 2004:254).

The understanding of the system of government of Christ’s church must begin with the Lord Himself and His Kingdom’s authority. He is the Head of the church; He governs, rules, leads through gifted church officers (Clowney 1995:202; Zgambo 2018:84). As the community of believers the church participates in one Lord, one Spirit, one baptism and thus becomes one body, says Migliore (2004:254).

The church belongs to God through the headship of Jesus Christ, and that is why it is referred to as the body of Christ. God is the owner of everything in heaven and on earth. Zgambo (2018:84) notes that the authority of Christ is vested in the preaching of the Good News which is the Word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. The church is under one sovereign Ruler who is Jesus Christ, the Head of the church. His Word is the only word that is law in the absolute sense and it is there to be obeyed by every person here on earth.

The images of the church as the body of Christ convey the issue of total dependence of all members of the community on one another. Members of the church are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28) and they have been given a variety of gifts for the enrichment and edification of the whole community (Migliore 2004:254).

Christ as the Head of the church (which can also be referred to as a community) governs in an extraordinary way in the church through the Word and Spirit according to the Scripture and the

Reformed system of church government (Zgambo 2018:84). The image of the body of Christ also speaks of the inter-connectedness between all persons who make up the church. The body is to be characterized by genuine fellowship as a unified and universal body, says Erickson (1998:332-333). The church, as the body of Christ, is the extension of His ministry through the Great Commission (Matt 28:18). Christ is the Head of the church, and His work is done in full by His body, which is the church. Frame (2013:1021) declares that the church as the body of Christ stresses the unity of the church with Christ, and the unity of each Christian with all the others. Christians should work together as the body of Christ. Christ is the head, and this should encourage us as believers to be subject to him, and to accept his direction (Frame, 2013:1021).

4.2.3 The Church as the temple of the Holy Spirit

Another image of the church used in the Bible is that it is referred to as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Kung (1962:371) mentions that the Church is a temple of the Holy Spirit, a temple which is revitalized by the Spirit. Through the use of this image of the temple of the Holy Spirit it points to Jesus Christ as the corner-stone of the Church. The RCZ, in her system of church government should listen and give room to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the governance and day- to- day running of the Church.

In his Trinitarian concept of the church, Paul presents a picture of the church as the temple of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who brought the Church into being (Erickson 1998:333⁹⁷ Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's day 21).

Paul in his teachings and writings pointed out clearly that the church of his time was now indwelt by the Spirit, both as an individual and as a group. This is supported by what he wrote to the Corinthians,

⁹⁷ This dramatic work of the Spirit occurred at Pentecost, where he baptized the disciples and converted three thousand, giving birth to the New Testament church. And he continued to populate the church: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body that is Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor.12:13).

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy himtemple you are” (1 Cor. 3:16-17) says Erickson (1998:333).

The church is also referred to as the community of the Spirit which can be used interchangeably with the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit. The church is portrayed as the community of the Spirit, the community of the end-time. This community of the Spirit is filled up by the gifts of the Spirit (Migliore 2004:254). Gifts of the Holy Spirit are there for the edification of the church. The church as the community of the Spirit sees no boundary in race, gender, and divisions among believers.

Powers (1996:97) states that:

In 1Corinthians 12, Paul discusses the nature and role of various God-given gifts and ministries within the congregation. The Spirit apportions the different gifts and ministries to each person individually, as he chooses for the common good of the church (12:7).

The Holy Spirit dwells in the church in order to give life to it. Systems of church government are good to be there in different denominations but the leading and guiding of the church is the duty of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ who is the Head of the church. The Rules and Regulations must add/emphasize in their salutation that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church.

The Holy Spirit conveys power to the church as Christ indicated in Acts 1:8. The Holy Spirit produces unity among the churches and creates sensitivity to the Lord’s leadership, argues Erickson (1998:334). The Holy Spirit makes the church holy and pure. Christ is the Head and the Holy Spirit is the soul of the church (Karkkainen 2002:27). Every church must exist in relationship to the Triune God in order for her to carry out the will of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in the life of believers through the Word.

The Holy Spirit is the one who gives growth to the church and leads the church towards a greater unity (Karkkainen 2002:38). Christians as the temple of the Holy Spirit should not allow that

temple to be defiled by sin. The believers are priests serving under the high Priest Jesus Christ says Frame (2013:1022) The RCZ's growth, both spiritually and numerically, must be under the direction and leadership of the Holy Spirit. The mission statement of the RCZ clearly states that the church must obediently and faithfully witness the Kingdom of God to mankind through the preaching, teaching and living the Word through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in a holistic and contextual way (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:13). Office-bearers and members of the church as a whole must listen to the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit who is leading the church of this generation and generations to come.

The church is the community of the Holy Spirit or temple of the Holy Spirit meaning that the Holy Spirit is the one leading the church through various systems of church governments in different denominations. What does this mean to today's church? The church as the temple of the Holy Spirit gives room to freedom of worship whereby strangers are welcomed; sharing power replaces the domination of a few individuals in worship. The church as a community or temple of the Holy Spirit can be defined as the priesthood of all believers. Therefore, the researcher will try to explain the meaning of "priesthood of all believers" in the next paragraph.

4.3 Priesthood of all believers

This sub-heading is very broad and rich in explaining what it means. This research will not attempt to do detailed research about the 'priesthood of all believers' because the objective of this chapter is to evaluate what the Bible teaches about church government in a theological way.

Jesus Christ is the High Priest and mediator because his death on the cross and resurrection has brought direct access to God for every believer, unlike what was taking place during the Old Testament times. During the Old Testament times people were "fellowshipping" to their God via the priest⁹⁸ (Kung 1962:373). Strauss (s.a) indicates that on the day of the Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on all people, not merely on the twelve (1 Pet 2:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). With

⁹⁸ A priest was a person appointed by God in the Old Testament to offer sacrifices, prayers, and praises to God on behalf of the people. This office was fulfilled by Christ, who has become the great High Priest for all believers (Grudem 2000:1252).

the gift of the Holy Spirit poured over all who believe, all Christians have therefore been anointed to the office of “all believers.” All believers are Prophets, Priests and Kings, and because of that capacity of the office of all believers, each person is a tool in the Saviour’s hands through which He cares for His church.

The believers from the New Testament times to this generation which we refer to as the priesthood of believers have been exercising the principle of democracy. Erickson (1998:344) posits that the work of Christ has made the offices of the priest, prophet and king unnecessary because all of them are merged in Him. This has given room for every believer to have access to the Holy of Holies. Every believer may approach God directly.

Preaching the word of God is now the duty of every believer, not like in the Old Testament where it was entrusted to only a few. Kung (1962:375) concedes that the priesthood of believers includes not only the witnessing of actions, of one’s whole life spent in loving self-sacrifice, but also the specific witness of the Word. However, the Reformed tradition underscores that preaching is the calling of the ordained minister; it does not mean that believers are not allowed to preach in the church. In the RCZ it is the duty of the minister to oversee who should be allowed to preach among church members. Priest of all believers is explained well in Romans 10 and the Heidelberg Catechism, question/answer 32 (Bruggen, 2000:98).

Believers as priests in the church today may offer several kinds of spiritual sacrifices to God in different ways, as mentioned below⁹⁹. Essentially, Old Testament priests were chosen by God, not self-appointed; and they were chosen for a purpose: to serve God with their lives by offering sacrifices. The priests of the Old Testament used to offer all kinds of sacrifices on the altar. However, in the New Testament, Apostle Paul developed this idea in his writings, as he spoke metaphorically of the kinds of things we offer up to God in a spirit of worship. So, according to Paul, what are the priestly offerings and sacrifices we can make as Christian *‘priests’*? We can offer the following:

⁹⁹ <https://www.commonground.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/GoingDeeper> Date of access: 11 Feb 2019.

1. Our whole lives are an offering. *'Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship' (Rom. 12:1-2).*
2. Relating and living with each other in a loving way is an offering. *'Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God' (Eph. 5:2).*
3. Verbally praising and thanking God is an offering. *'Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.'* (Heb. 13:15).
4. Being generous to others in need is an offering. *'Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God' (Heb. 13:16)*
5. Financially underwriting the advance of God's kingdom is an offering. *'I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.'* (Phil. 4:16). Paul needed financial support to be freed in order to advance the gospel, and all provisions to that end, were an offering.
6. Affirming the ministry of fellow-Christ-followers is an offering. *'But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you' (Phil. 2:17).* The analogy Paul uses here is that of the Old Testament worshipper bringing a sacrifice, with the priest then pouring out an additional drink offering on top of that. In the same way, it is not for Christian leaders to monopolize ministry opportunities, but rather to multiply and then to affirm the ministry of all the Christians under their lead.
7. Being willing to make great sacrifices, even to die, in the process of obeying Christ, is an offering. *'For I am already being poured out like a drink-offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith.'* (2 Tim. 4:6-7).

8. Pointing others to Christ is an offering. *'God gave (Paul) the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God' (Rom. 15:16).*¹⁰⁰

Grudem (1994: 934) maintains that when we talk of the priesthood of all believers we believe that all believers have access directly to God in order to seek to know His will. Every member must be included in all processes of the decision- making of the Church. This is also supported by Volf (1998:166) who says God gives faith to individuals so that they can participate freely in worship- services. Each person is free to relate to and worship God directly without any limitations. Erickson (1998:345) holds that each person is important to the Body of Christ. The church is full of priests who are serving under Jesus Christ the High Priest (Heb. 7-8). This is the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers says Frame (2013:1022). According to Anon. (2013:26) the priesthood of all believers is underlined, that is each believer has a potential gift, a specific task and a distinctive way of revealing his or her contribution within the congregation. Therefore every believer is vital and, if possible, is given a duty within the congregation (1 Cor. 12:3-7, 12-18).

If this is the case, what does the Bible then say about church government? In this section the research will dwell a lot upon the system of church government in the light of the teachings of the Bible, especially those in the New Testament.

4.4 New Testament teachings about church government

This section will reflect on the Biblical teaching on the system of church government through a literature review. The researcher will study some Bible chapters by means of Biblical exegesis in a hermeneutical manner.

The aim is to investigate the scriptural principles of church government applied in the organisation in the New Testament in the Reformed Church government system (Zgambo

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.commonground.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/GoingDeeper> Date of access: 11 Feb. 2019.

2018:83). The scriptural principles of the New Testament Church are the pillars on which the legitimate Presbyterian system of church government rests as the basis for evaluating the system of church government in the RCZ.

4.4.1 The Kingdom of God

According to Zgambo (2018:83) the point of departure for the good government of the Church is all about the Kingdom of God and about how Christ, as the Head of the Kingdom of God, governs the church.

This was explained quite clearly by Grudem (1994:863-864) who summarized the explanation given by Ladd, (1974:111-119) about the relationship of the Church and the Kingdom of God. Ladd (1974:111-119) mentions five aspects of the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God. These are as follows:

1. The church is not the kingdom (Jesus Christ and the early Christians preached about the kingdom of God which was near, not that the church was near, and preached the good news of the kingdom, not the good news of the church: Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23,31).
2. The kingdom creates the church (the people enter into God's kingdom and they become joined/connected to the human fellowship of the church).
3. The church witnesses to the kingdom (for Jesus said, "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world," Matt. 24:14).
4. The church is the instrument of the kingdom (for the Holy Spirit, manifesting the power of the kingdom, works through the disciples to heal the sick and cast out demons, as he did in the ministry of Jesus: Matt.10:8; Luke 10:17).
5. The church is the custodian of the kingdom (for the church has been given the keys of the kingdom of heaven: Matt. 16:19)¹⁰¹.

¹⁰¹ These five points are summarized from Ladd, *Theology*, pp. 111-119 by Wayne Grudem (1994:863-864).

The understanding of the government of Christ's church must begin with the Lord Himself and His Kingdom's authority. He rules the church through church officers, but he is the Head of the church (Clowney 1995:202; Zgambo 2018:84). Christ governs His church through people as is written in Matt. 16:19 which says: *“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”*.

The kingdom of God¹⁰² is an eschatological reality because it exists both in the future towards which history tends, and in the present, says Janssen (2006:47). The kingdom of God is about the rule and reign of God through the Headship of Christ in the life of the church. Christ heads his church through the use of offices.

4.4.2 The Theology of Office

The office was and is still used by God to do His work. Janssen (2006:131) argues that the subject of office is theology proper, and not simply ecclesiology. This means that the theology of office is not a subsection of the doctrine of the church. The offices are deeply rooted in the nature and the work of God. Zgambo (2018:85) asserts that in the Old Testament dispensation, leadership functioned primarily through God's sanctioned offices of the prophet, priest, and king. According to Elwell (1984:793) Christ performed his ministry and saving work in a threefold role of prophet, priest and king. These offices are known as the three offices of Christ. Because of this development, the system of government of all churches, who confess to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, must be guided by the offices of Christ in their government system. The Reformed tradition and the principles of the Bible do not include the office of the deacon in the system of church government. Moreover, in this research the researcher is trying to come up with a theological evaluation of the systems of church government¹⁰³.

¹⁰² In scripture, the kingdom of God is nowhere described as either a natural development of created reality or as a product of human work. It is always a gift from God (Janssen (2006:48).

¹⁰³ In the next chapter the researcher will attend to the system of church government of the RCZ whose church council is made up of the minister as the chairperson, elders and deacons/deaconesses as members of the church council

The New Testament understanding of the office could be seen as deriving from the Jewish synagogue heritage, which in turn originated from the Old Testament. The triune God uses the office throughout the field of history. The offices have originated from God himself.

Janssen (2006:132) notes that predestination is at the heart of office. Through evaluating this statement theologically it shows that the system of church government of all churches, including the RCZ, has its origin from God through Jesus Christ as the Head of the church.

If we read the New Testament scriptures, we can conclude that Christ is the source and origin of the Office (Matt.28:19-20; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 11:2-12).

Matthew 28:19-20 reads, “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I am surely with you always, to the very end of the age*”.

According to Grudem (1994:624), Christ fulfils the three offices of the Old Testament in the following ways: as *prophet* He reveals God to us and speaks God’s words to us; as *priest* He both offers a sacrifice to God on our behalf and is Himself the sacrifice that is offered; and as *king* He rules over the church and over the universe as well. This is a summary of the answer of the question in Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 12 which reads: Why is He called *Christ*, that is, *Anointed*? (Williamson 1993:56)¹⁰⁴ which says:

Because He is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of His body has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession for us with the Father; and our eternal King, who governs by His Word and Spirit, and defends and preserves us in the salvation for us.

¹⁰⁴ G.I. Williamson received the B.D. degree from Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary. He has served congregations of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He is the author of the Study Guides to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism, as well as editor of the *Ordained Servant*, a journal for elders and deacons.

The office-bearers in today's church are "servants" who are there primarily to receive their mandate to serve Christ who is the Head of the church (Zgambo 2018:86).

4.4.2.1 Christ as Prophet

Christ as prophet revealed the Father and the heavenly truth, says Erickson (1998:239). Christ understood himself to be a prophet because at one time his ministry was not received well in Nazareth and he said, "*A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and in his own house*" (Matt.13:57). He was recognized as a prophet by those who heard him preaching. During the time of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem the people said, "*This is the prophet Jesus of Nazareth of Galilee*" (Matt. 21:11)¹⁰⁵.

Elwell (1984:793) says that, in fulfilling the office work of the prophet, Christ claims to bring the message of the Father and proclaims his message to the people and his disciples. Jesus Christ continues to exercise his office of prophet by revealing to us through his word (John 16:12-15) and through his Spirit ((1 Pet.1:10-11). God revealed himself to us through His Word (Parallel Heidelberg Catechism, Q 25)¹⁰⁶; Bierma, 2005:143-145).

Boice (1986:295) is in agreement with Elwell that Christ is acknowledged to be a prophet in Luke 24:19 which says, "*What things?*" he asked. "*About Jesus of Nazareth,*" they replied. "*He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.*" This verse shows that Christ is not the one who was claiming to be the prophet but people were confessing on their own that He is the prophet. Spykman (1992:408) mentions that in his prophetic office Christ is the personified Word, speaking as God and for God to a lost humanity. Jesus Christ is our "chief Prophet" meaning that he fulfilled all prophecies of the Old Testament.

¹⁰⁵ Jesus was a prophet and he was fulfilment of prophecy. Peter specifically identifies Him with Moses' prediction in Deuteronomy 18:15: "*The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up*" (Acts 3:22). The same sentiments were echoed by Grudem (1994:625).

¹⁰⁶ Parallel Heidelberg Catechism for young and old. A parallel version for Church and Home devotion, published by the Reformed Churches in South Africa for use in home, catechism classes and school. The structure of this book is that it is divided from the Lord's Day 1 to the Lord's Day 52. This covers the 52 weeks of the year.

Grudem (1994:626) observes that Jesus was not merely a messenger of revelation from God like all other prophets of the Old Testament, but was Himself the source of revelation from God. All the Old Testament prophets used the saying, “*Thus says the Lord,*” but Jesus could begin with an authoritative statement like, “But I say unto you” (Matt.5:22). Jesus Christ as prophet is the one whom the Old Testament prophets prefigured in their speech and in their actions (Grudem 1994:626). Christ continued to reveal himself as a prophet through His church when he promised them his presence in the ongoing task as mentioned in scriptures (Matt. 28:20) which says, “*And I am surely with you always, to the very end of the age*” (Erickson 1998:240).

4.4.2.2 Christ as Priest

According to Elwell (1984:793), Christ, in fulfilling his office work of priest, offered himself to God as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile the church to God (Rom. 3:26; Heb. 2:17; 9:14, 28). Christ as a priest continues to intercede for all those who come to the Father through Him as written in Heb. 7:25, “*Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them*”.

Boice (1986:295) is of the same contention with Elwell when he argues that Jesus is declared to be a priest throughout the book of Hebrews. Christ is portrayed in the book of Hebrews as the high priest who came in place of God to redeem the people from their sins. Christ was appointed to act for others in the things pertaining to God (Boice 1986:301). His sacrifice was complete and eternal unlike those which were offered in the Old Testament. Spykman (1992:409) declares that Christ’s priestly office is closely connected with the office of priesthood as it functioned in the Old Testament’s history of redemptions. This is so because he was appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God. Jesus Christ suffered as sacrificial Lamb to redeem us. Christ becomes our attorney of defence says Spykman (1992:412).

Grudem (1994:626) shows that he is in agreement with Elwell and Boice that Jesus, through His office of priest, offered a perfect sacrifice and that he continually brings those who believe in

him near to God¹⁰⁷. Christ is our only High Priest whilst in the Old Testament there were many priests. The Heidelberg Catechism question/answer 31 notes that Christ's sacrifice was once and for all (Bruggen, 2000:98; Bierma, 2005:144).

One of the functions of Christ as a priest was that he continually prayed for all the people. This was the key function of the priests during the Old Testament times (Grudem 1994:627). According to 1 Tim. 2:5 it is stated that Christ is the true and perfect man to pray for us, "*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*".

The office of priest shows that Christ is constantly praying for the people so that their faith may not cease or fade but that they may be victorious in the life here on earth.

4.4.2.3 Christ as King

Christ as king meets the problem of man's weakness and dependence, supplying them with power and protection, says Elwell (1984:793). Grudem (1994:628) is in agreement with Elwell that in the Old Testament the king has the authority to rule over the nation of Israel while in the New Testament Jesus was born to be the King of the Jews. However, Jesus' kingship was not that of an earthly king. In John 18:36, Jesus said, "*My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.*" Here Jesus was trying to show people that he was not a political figure for he was a king who came in a different guise/role.

Luke 19:38 states that, "*Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!*" "*Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.*" Grudem (1994:629) states that after his resurrection Jesus Christ was given authority over the church and over the universe by God the Father. He was raised and made to sit at the right hand of God in the heavenly place. This made a great distinction between the kingship of Jesus Christ and other kings in the world.

¹⁰⁷ Hebrews 10:19-22 says, "Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20. By a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."

Offices in the church have got their origin from the Bible and in the New Testament all offices originated from Jesus Christ¹⁰⁸ who is the Head of the Church. As Christ is the Head of the Church, it follows that the Church must have officers. We will continue to be guided by the objectives of this chapter which read, *“To have a closer look at some biblical teachings about the doctrine of church government.”*

Biblical chapters and verses are to be consulted in a hermeneutical way in order for us to arrive at a good and sound theological evaluation of the government system of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

The exegesis of scriptures in the coming section is to address the relevance of the RCZ to the theological church government system as it is explained in the Bible. It is true that any form of government must be in line with what the Bible teaches. Any system of church government which goes against the teachings of the Bible must be evaluated. Erickson (1992:342) says, “An ideal form of church government will fulfil the biblical principles of order and the priesthood of all believers.”

4.5 Officers in the New Testament Church

The New Testament idea of office had the background of the Jewish synagogue tradition and this has its origin from the Old Testament. It is this office with which the first Jewish Christians were only too familiar, that continued in the Christian church under the direction of the apostles (cf. 1 Cor. 11:22-25, 12:28; Eph. 4:11-12). Zgambo (2018:85) argues that if the offices of elder and teacher were clearly distinguished in the old dispensation, then one could expect this to be continued in the new dispensation, with a special teaching office in the Christian church in the New Testament.

¹⁰⁸ Grudem (1994:629) says, “When Christ came, we saw for the first time the fulfilment of these three roles, since he was the perfect prophet, who mostly fully declared God’s words to us, the perfect high priest, who offered the supreme sacrifice for sins and who brought his people near to God, and the true and rightful king of the universe, who will reign forever with a sceptre of righteousness over the new heavens and new earth.”

As mentioned earlier in the New Testament, Christ is the origin and the source of the offices. Eph. 4:11-12 says, *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.....”* These offices mentioned in the book of Ephesians are referred to as extraordinary offices. Harvey (1982:66) argues that they were the temporary officers who belonged to the apostolic period only. These were the prophets and apostles, while the evangelists and teachers/preachers were permanent but an essential part of the full government system of the Church. Little attention will be given to these offices because they do not address the issue which is being researched

4.5.1 Extraordinary officers

4.5.1.1 Apostles

According to Stott (1979:160) apostles were messengers sent to accomplish a specific task such as that of missionaries. They were chosen by Christ to be the eyewitnesses. The main purpose or function of this office was the introduction of Christianity and the full organization of the church. Both Stott (1979:160) and Harvey (1982:67) are in agreement that when the full organization of the church was established, the office of the apostle ceased.

4.5.1.2 Prophets

The prophets in the primary sense of the Bible, referred to a person who stood in the council of God. He was a representative and had the authority to speak on behalf of God. He was the mouthpiece of God (Stott 1979:161). Prophets had a two-fold function such as foretelling the future and confirming the divine origin of the gospel which is the Good News (Harvey 1982:67). It is also argued that the office of the prophet was also temporary like that of the apostle. Harvey (1982:68) is of the opinion that the necessity of this office ceased with the accomplishment of the New Testament tenet.

4.5.1.3 Evangelists

The word evangelist is mentioned three times in the New Testament (Acts 21:8; Eph.4:11-12; 2 Tim. 4:5). Stott (1979:163) notes that the evangelist has to do with the spreading of the gospel. Nowadays it is the duty and the mandate of every Christian to spread the gospel; however, we cannot rule out that in our church we can have members who are bestowed with the gift of evangelistic preaching. Evangelists may be a permanent office but they do not have a permanent charge/appointment at their local congregation. This means that they do not operate in a system of church government. Harvey (1982:69) mentions Titus 1:5 which proves that evangelists do not have permanent local charge. The verse says, *“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might strengthen out (set in order) what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I direct you.”*

Stott (1979:163) proposes that even in today’s church there is great need for gifted evangelists who can forge new ways and skills to reach and penetrate unreached places with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The evangelists are there to expand the ministries and they should not be limited to a local church. Zgambo (2018:88) notes that evangelists travel from place to place preaching the gospel as is said in Acts 8:5, *“Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Christ there.”*

4.5.1.4 Teachers

Teachers in the extraordinary office are also referred to as preachers. Stott (1979:163) is of the opinion that every pastor must be a teacher who is gifted to the ministry of God’s Word to a congregation, groups and individual.

This office of the teacher and preachers is a permanent office- it does not cease like the office of the apostle and that of the prophet.

These extraordinary offices do not mean that they were competing with one another but that they were complementing one another for the growth of the church to a full organization with permanent offices which are now referred to as ordinary offices.

4.5.2 Ordinary Offices

Vorster (1999:15) refers to Article 2 of the Church Order of the RCSA, “There are four types of offices: ministers of the Word, professors at a Theological School, elders and deacons”. These offices in the church are instruments in the hands of Christ who is the Head of the church. He uses them to conserve and build the Church.

The exceptional ministries or extraordinary offices ceased to exist and the three offices remained and these are the ministry of the Word, ministry of church government, and the diaconal ministry (Vorster 1999:16). He, however, argued that women were not elected to the office of the Word and ministry of the elders (1 Cor. 14:34-37; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 1 Tim 3:1-7). The Reformed Church in Zimbabwe at present has agreed that women are eligible for the office of the Word (Rutoro 2007:116).

4.5.2.1 Office of the Word

Christ as the head of the Church is the one who calls people to serve in various offices. Ministers of the Word are generally referred to as professional church leaders who are called clergy (Means 1989:23). The Bible used the terms, overseer, and elder and pastor interchangeably in the New Testament. The word elder may be used to refer to the minister of the Word and also to the elder who is not a clergyman. Calvin mentioned that pastors and elders are both referred to as elders in the Bible yet there are two kinds of presbyters: those who labour in the Word and those who do not carry on the preaching of the Word but rule the congregation well (Janssen and van den Brooke 2010:50).

Means (1989:25) says, “*The term overseer (or, bishop; Greek ἐπίσκοπος) may be more closely associated with Greek culture, while the term elder (Greek presbuteros) seems more Jewish. Elders appear to be primarily a title; overseer refers to an office; and pastor (Greek poimanos) designates the shepherding function of that office. Multiple leadership, a plurality of elders, was the norm of New Testament churches, if not the imperative of Scripture*”.

Ephesians 4:11-12 says, *“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets and some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for the work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”*.

Ministry of the Word or office of the minister is hereby explained in these verses as the office of the pastor and teachers. According to Foulkes (1989:127) pastors and teachers were gifted to be responsible for the day- to- day building up of the local church. It is argued that their main task is to shepherd the flock. The duty of the pastor is like that of the shepherd who is there to feed the flock with spiritual food and to protect them from spiritual danger.

The purpose of this office of the ministry of the Word is primarily to equip the church for the work of the ministry with the view of building up the body of Christ (Hendriksen 1967:197 & Foulkes 1989:127).

The minister of the Word is there to shepherd the church or a local congregation on a daily basis unlike other offices such as those of the prophet, apostle, and evangelist which cease with time. The minister of the Word can equip members of the congregation by forming small groups with the aim of doing evangelism, and Bible studies, says Vorster (1999:33).

Another understanding of the meaning of the office of the minister of the Word, is explained in John 20:21-23 which says:

“Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, I am sending you” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven, if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven”

The minister of the Word is the instrument in the hands of Christ to preach the Word, to persevere in prayer on behalf of the congregation (CRC, Acts, 1965:58; Vorster 1999:33). The Bible talks about the pastor or teacher as the same thing. 1 Cor. 12:28-29 says:

“And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance and of different tongues, 29 Are all apostles, Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?”

Preaching, teaching and pastoring, these words can be used interchangeably because in the Bible they mean one thing. At the general synod of the RCSA¹⁰⁹ which was held in Potchefstroom on 5 January as well as on 29 June 2009 and the following days, it was concluded that the ordained ministry is different from the ministry of all believers and it entails the following:

- A special task/assignment that is a special responsibility given by the Lord to provide leadership for the service that others have to render in the church (Matt 16:19; 18:18; John 17:18; 20:23; Eph. 4:12-16).
- A specific permanent list of duties to be performed on the Lord’s instructions (their ministry focuses on inculcating the word and the doctrine) (1 Tim 3:1, 5, 10; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet 5: 2-3).
- Particular requirements that people should meet to be ordained to be ministers (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim 3:2-12; Tit 1:6-9).
- A vocation by the Lord via the church, consisting in the church’s recognition and appointment of persons with the requisite gifts who meet the requirements (Mark 3:13-14; Acts 1:20-26; 6:3, 5; 14:23).
- Public acceptance and assumption of duties and consecratory promise of God’s power (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 14:23; 1 Tim 4:15; 2 Tim 1:6).
- The church’s obedient submission to the good leadership provided (Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim 5:17).

¹⁰⁹ Reformed Churches in South Africa, ACTA of the General Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa held in Potchefstroom on 5 January (2009:456) and following days as well as 29 June and some days later.

The ordained ministries must take special care to see to it that true faith is maintained, true doctrine practised everywhere; those who transgress are disciplined and those who are in need are helped and comforted according to their needs.

Zgambo (2018:91) is of the opinion that the ministry of the Word is the ministry of reconciliation where God wants to reconcile Himself with human beings because Apostle Paul writes:

“God gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. Moreover, He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-20)”.

The office of the minister, in the Bible is primarily about preaching which is officially ministering the Word. The Word to be preached is about reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-19). Van Dam (2009:113) reasons that the office of the minister of the Word requires special gifts of understanding and interpretation of Scripture because a minister of the Word functions as the mouthpiece of God to convey His message to the congregation.

Elwell (1984:1044) holds that in the New Testament Church the teacher would offer systematic instructions to the local churches. This is indicated where Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy in chapter 2:2 saying:

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others”.

Paul indicates that the faith is to be taught to both women and men who also in turn are to teach others, says Powers (1996:108).

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul writes that:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”.

The minister of the Word, as one is referred to in the Reformed Churches, is there to teach the Word of God. The duty of the minister according to the passage is to impart knowledge concerning the oracles of God’s revelation in Christ. Hendriksen (1957:303) holds that warnings based on the Word of God must be issued without hesitation and errors in the doctrine must be corrected. Therefore, false teachers must be exposed in order to safeguard the purity of the gospel. The minister of the Word in the New Testament times was there to train every Christian to be disciplined in the things of God.

Paul’s argument in his letter to Timothy is that he must entrust what he has learnt to others who in turn must teach others to live a Christ-like life which pleases God all the time. According to Hendriksen (1957:303) when the Word is used correctly by a consecrated servant of God who does his/her duties faithfully, the Word will be restorative in the lives of those who hear these words. The office of the minister of the Word in the New Testament Church played an important role as it can be seen in today’s church. The Word must be preached as a way of teaching, reproof, correction and for the edification of the Church so that it will continuously grow in the will of Jesus Christ who is the head of the church.

4.5.2.1.1 Election and duties of a minister

Vorster (1999:17) refers to the Church Order of the RCSA article 3 which reads as follows: “No person shall be permitted to proclaim the Word and administer sacraments unless he has been lawfully called to do so and has been admitted to the office”. This shows us that Christ is the one who calls people to serve in various ministries. God’s calling of a person to serve him is an inner calling which must be supported by the external calling which is done by the church.

The Church Order Article 4 of the Reformed Churches of South Africa (GKSA) states that the calling and admission of a person into the office of the Word must be examined by the classis where he is a resident. The Article says:

The lawful calling and admission of a person who has not previously served in the office of the Word, and who has been examined preparatively (preparatoir) by the classis in which he resides, shall comprise the following: first, after prayers have been said, the election by the church council and deacons according to the customary local procedure or as determined by the church council; and, in churches with only one minister, with the advice of the classis or the counsellor (consulent) appointed by the classis for this purpose. Secondly, examination by the classis (to whom the call shall be submitted for approval) of the person to be called, which shall involve the advice of the deputies appointed by the regional synod. Thirdly, approbation and approval by the members of the church in question, which implies that no legitimate objection was lodged after the name of the person to be called, had been announced in church for at least three Sundays. Finally, the public ordination of the person in the congregation and of the deputies of the classis according to the form prescribed for this purpose¹¹⁰.

This article shows that the congregation played a role in the calling of a minister in the office of the Word as was taking place in the New Testament (Acts 11:22; 13:2; Phil. 2:25). Ordination started in the Bible as Paul says to Timothy, 1 Tim. 4:14:

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Paul was reminding Timothy that as an ordained person he should use his gift for the edification of the church, not for his personal gain.

Migliore (2004:296) is of the same understanding when he argues that the call to ministry of the Word and sacrament has both an inward and an outward aspect. People are called to the ministry by the Holy Spirit, who bequeaths special gifts and motivates the beneficiaries to devote their lives to the gospel ministry.

In Titus 1:5-11 Paul said: *“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I have directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing*

¹¹⁰ Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA).

dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, and who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it”.

Paul was instructing Titus to elect elders to lead the church. This shows us that during the New Testament church, ministers of the Word were elected; however, they were not referred to as ministers but as elders. Titus was an associate of Paul, which is why Paul was identifying him as “my true son” in faith (Titus 1:4).

Zgambo (2018:91) says:

Preaching is officially ministering the Word, which is the Word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19). True proclamation does not take place through the Scripture alone, but through its exposition. God does not send books to men, He sends his messengers.

However, the minister of the Word who serves in the ministry of reconciliation through the preaching of the Word does not obtain rights and obligations by entering a contract of employment with a local congregation. The minister only enters a contract of employment with the congregation through public ordination as already alluded in Article 4 of the Church Order of the RCSA (Zgambo, 2018:92).

For one to be elected to this ministry in the New Testament times, he must live a blameless life together with his family. He is to be a person with children who share the same Christian faith with their father (Hendriksen 1957:347). This is not the case with the people who are being called to the same ministry in this contemporary generation. Guthrie (1990:32) argues that the terms ‘elder’ and ‘overseer’ appeared to be used interchangeably. He concludes that these terms in the epistles could have been used to describe the same people.

The minister of the Word once called or elected to the ministry, will serve a life-long calling. The calling is a life-long one because the ministry needs all his time, and therefore he must not enter any secular vocation, argues Vorster (1999:28). In Romans 1:1 Paul said:

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.”

Those who were called to the ministry of the Word during the New Testament era, were set apart to preach the word for the whole of their lives. This is the case with the Reformed Churches because ministers of the Word are not allowed to enter a secular vocation (Vorster 1999:28). The Bible says, “men who have risked their life for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:26).

When one is called to the ministry of the Word as was done during the New Testament time, one has to do it for the whole of one’s life. Janssen (2006:227) believes that the minister of the Word like any other office, is elected, called and ordained within the congregation. He must receive an external call from the congregation (Acts 13-14). Paul and Barnabas were set apart by the church. They did not set themselves apart to do missionary work but it was the church through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Church Order of the Reformed Churches of South Africa, article 16, reads:

“The office of a minister of the Word is to persevere in prayers, proclaim the Word and administer the sacraments, attend to and oversee his fellow ministers, the elders, the deacons and church members, and ultimately, in conjunction with the elders, exercise the discipline of the church and ensure that everything in the church takes place in an orderly and proper manner,” (Vorster 1999:32).

This was the instruction given to the disciple by Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19 where he said: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* and 1 Tim.5:17 says:

“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.”

The Bible is making it clear that those who preached during the New Testament times were the responsibility of the congregation or believers who had the duty to take care of them through

rewarding them in a material way. Hendriksen (1957:180) indicates that during Paul's days a distinction began to be made between those whom we today call "ministers" and those we call elders. A person who spends all his time and effort doing the kingdom ministry deserves honour. The minister of the Word spends most of his time teaching and preaching. The Bible is clear about preaching and teaching being another way of directing the affairs of the church. The minister of the Word is recognised as the only one with deep knowledge in the spiritual and theological life of the congregation, says Zgambo (2018:90).

Driscoll (2008:18-19) declares that the Bible provides the duties of elders- pastors as follows:

- Praying and studying Scripture (Acts 6:4)
- Ruling/leading the church (1 Tim. 5:17)
- Managing the church (1 Tim. 3:4-5)
- Caring for the people in the church (1 Pet. 5:2-5)
- Giving account to God for the church (1 Pet. 5:2-5)
- Living exemplary lives (Heb. 13:7)
- Rightly using the authority God has given them (Acts 20:28)
- Teaching the Bible correctly (Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:2)
- Preaching (1 Tim. 5:17)
- Praying for the sick (James 5:13-15)
- Teaching sound doctrine and refuting false teachings (Titus 1:9)
- Working hard (1 Thess. 5:12)

- Rightly use money and power (1 Pet 5:1-3)
- Protecting the church from false teachers (Acts 20:17-31)
- Disciplining unrepentant Christians (Matt. 18:15-17)
- Obeying the secular laws as the legal ruling body of a corporation (Rom.13:1-7)
- Developing others leaders and teachers (Eph.4:11-16; 2 Tim. 2:1-2) (Driscoll, 2008:18-19).

In the RCZ, it is the duty of the congregation to take care of and look after the welfare of the minister of the Word in the congregation because they (ministers) are not allowed to look for employment elsewhere. All congregations and departments in the RCZ are obliged to pay for medical schemes, pension schemes, funeral policy, travelling allowances, stipends, hospitality, and responsibility - allowances (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:44).

This is done for the minister of the Word who was being trained, called and ordained as the minister of the RCZ. The minister of the Word as an office-bearer is an instrument in the hands of Christ and is therefore responsible and answerable to Christ. He does not work alone but works together with other offices but with his own responsibilities as instrument in the broad ministry of Christ (Vorster 1999:35). Mark 9:35 says: *“Sitting down, Jesus called the twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last and the servant of all.”*

Equality of office-bearers in the church is of great importance because this is what was being practised in the New Testament church. Jesus taught his disciples to practise subservient leadership. Office-bearers, the minister of the Word included, must bear in mind that no- one is greater than the other but they complement one another because Jesus Christ is the only Head of the church.

Stott (1975:68) says that Christ’s immediate purpose in the giving of pastors and teachers to his church is so that they will equip all the people for the ministry. The main duty of the minister of

the Word, here referred to as pastor by Stott, is to equip God's people for their ministries and to build up the church which is Christ's body.

As was the case during the New Testament era, the minister of the Word is there to complement the elders in the government system of the church. Preaching, praying, administering of sacraments and exercising of church discipline, is another function of church government.

In the RCZ, the minister of the Word is the chairperson of the church council, so he/she is there to direct the proceedings of the church council when it is in session (*Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:30). This was explained fully in 1 Tim. 5:17 where it said that there are elders who rule, and those who labour in preaching and teaching. The Bible does not mention anything about the minister of the Word but uses the word elders in plural form and thereby implies the assumption that the word is being used interchangeably to mean the elder and an overseer (Hendriksen 1957:179). The RCZ uses the Presbyterian form of church governance. The researcher now examines what the Bible says about the office of an elder.

4.5.2.2 The office of elder

Jesus Christ as the head of the church rules his church by means of elders as part of the structure of his divine kingship. Two words, presbuteros and episkopos are used in the New Testament to describe the office of elder (Vorster 1999:41). Paul explained in detail the office of elder in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 where he said:

“Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgement as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.”

This chapter can be read in conjunction with Titus 1: 5-9 which says:

“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless- not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, and who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

On all these two chapters Paul lays a list of qualifications for leadership qualities to be found in an elder. An elder is a person who manages God’s household. Leadership system of the council of elders has the final authority in all matters concerning the congregation at local level, the synod level and worldwide, (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 1 Tim.5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4), (Anon. 2013:20).

4.5.2.2.1 Origin of the Eldership

According to Hendriksen (1957:11) and Barclay (1966:119) public worship led to the institution of the office of elders to create fellowship among believers. The office originated to give direction to the believers and to perform tasks in the church with Christ as the head. Reymond (2004:93) declares that the church governance by elders has a long history in the Bible. Moses, the priests and Levites, the judges and kings of Israel, were all assisted in the governance of the Israelites by the elders of Israel.

Barclay (1965:311) investigates 1 Peter 5:1-4 for the origin of eldership and concludes that eldership has a Jewish background whereby the Jews traced the beginning of the office of elders back to the days when the Israelites were travelling through the wilderness to the Promised land. It is the time when Moses felt the burdens of leadership and he appointed seventy elders to assist

him (Numbers 11:16-30). It was after this that elders became a permanent feature of Jewish life, says Barclay (1965:311-312).

The elders also have a Greek background because in the Egyptian communities elders were responsible for town council affairs and helping those who would have encountered gender-based violence. Barclay (1965:313) says that long before Christianity took over this title, the title of elder was one of honour, both in the Jewish and in Greco-Roman world.

He (Barclay, 1965:313-319) sums up that it was Paul's custom to ordain elders in every community where he preached, and in every Church which he founded. The office of elder was instituted as a permanent office in the church after the office of Apostle ceased. Williams (1972:60) mentions that a most significant reference to elders in the book of Acts is found in Acts 14:23, which reads: "*They also appointed elders for them in each congregation, and with prayer and fasting committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their faith*".

Powers (1996:126) asserts that the apostles administered discipline in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 5:1-11), watched over the spread of the gospel (Acts 8:14) and the growth of congregations (Acts 9:32-43). He also argues that a group of people in the church at Jerusalem were called elders (Acts 11:30). The book of Acts is full of passages which mention elders such as Acts 14:23; 15:4; 21:17-19. Paul, as already mentioned in the above passages (1 Tim.3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) instructed the congregations about the appointment of elders. One way of strengthening the churches was making provision for leadership in them, says Bruce (1990:280). The provision of leadership to the ministry of Paul and Barnabas was vital for spiritual guidance in churches which they had founded during their missionary journeys.

4.5.2.2.2 The functions of elders

The first function of elders in the New Testament was that of overseeing the congregation. Paul says to elders at a church of Ephesus in Acts 20:28, "*Keep watch over yourself and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood*" (Powers 1996:127). Therefore the role of exercising an

oversight/supervision includes the responsibility of taking care of God's church (1 Tim. 3:5). If one is able to manage one's family in a way which pleases God then, so likewise, one can manage to take care of God's church.

The second responsibility of the elder in the passage mentioned earlier is that of teaching, preaching and worship (1 Tim3:2b; Titus 1:9). Hendriksen (1957:11) uses the phrase, '*qualified to teach*'; this sentiment is also expressed by Powers who states that preaching and teaching in the New Testament was not only limited to elders but also to deacons (Powers 1996:128).

The third function of an elder mentioned in 1 Tim 3:5 is that of pastoring the congregation. He must be a man who is able to take care of God's church. Powers (1996:130) contends that Peter exhorts his fellow believers to be shepherds of God's flock that is under their care (1 Peter 5:2-3). The Bible says:

"Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them- not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be, not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."

Elders are mandated with the responsibility of guarding against those who teach false doctrines among the congregation. This can only be possible if the elders know the Word of God. The best job description for elders is 1 Tim.5:17, where there are two major emphases: first, which is directing the affairs of the church and, second, is that of preaching and teaching¹¹¹ (Longman 111, 2014:253).

According to Driscoll (2008:14) the Bible defines the qualifications of an elder in two primary places (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), and the lists are virtual identical.

The ministry of the elder entails the following:

¹¹¹ Tremper Longman 111 (PhD, Yale University) is the Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies at Westmont College in California. He has authored or co-authored numerous books and commentaries, including, reading the Bible with Heart and Mind. An introduction to the Old Testament, the NIV Application Commentary on Daniel, and the volumes on Job and Proverbs in the Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms.

- To guard the flock vigilantly (Acts 20:28).
- To minister to the church as overseers (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2), which includes applying discipline (John 20:23; 1 Thes. 5:12).
- To care for the church (1 Tim 3:5).
- To be a steward of God's household (Tit 1:7).
- To be constantly mindful of the example of one's apostolic duty when ministering to one's flock (Acts 20:31).
- To equip faithful workers for their ministry, namely for the building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).
- To teach (1 Tim 3:2; Eph. 4:11).
- To teach sound doctrine (Tit 1:9.)
- To refute dissidents (Tit 1:9).
- To provide leadership (1 Tim 5:17).
- To preach and instruct (1 Tim 5:17).
- To pray for the sick, anointing them with oil (Jas 5:14) (RCSA, ACTA¹¹², 2009:606).

It is the duty of the elders in the RCZ to perform their responsibilities as is explained in 1 Tim.3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Bruce (1990:280) is of the idea that elders were appointed to serve

¹¹² Refer to the Reformed Churches in South Africa, ACTA of the first General Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa held in Potchefstroom on 5 January 2009 and the following days as well as on 29 June 2009 and following days.

their fellow-believers as mentors to give instructions and encouragement which they required in the midst of the hardships and persecution that they were to face for their Christian faith.

Enns (2008:366) says the duties of the elder involve shepherding of the flock (Acts 20:28), teaching (1 Tim. 3:2), ruling or general leadership (1 Tim. 5:17), and guarding against error (Titus 1:9). The issue of shepherding, teaching and ruling shows that during the New Testament period the elder was more or less like an assistant pastor. This will receive ample attention in chapter five of this research where an evaluation of the merits and demerits of the government system of the RCZ, will be discussed in detail.

According to Allison (2011:589) the responsibilities of elder included authoritatively leading the church (1 Tim. 2:12-3:7; 5:17), teaching sound doctrine (1 Tim. 3:2;5:17; Titus 1:9), shepherding the people of God (1 Pet. 5:1-4). And praying for healing (James 5:13-16). The church governance in the New Testament is for the elders only.

4.5.2.2.3 Qualifications of elders

The qualifications of elders in the New Testament are explained in detail. Titus 1:9 says, *“He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”*

The argument here is that a person to be elected to the office of elder must not be a recent convert but he must be a person who has been adequately taught the Biblical doctrines and is able to teach this gospel to others and correct those who are going astray (Powers 1996:131).

O’Donovan (1992) is supported by both Powers (1996:131) and Vorster (1999:44) that elders have the responsibility to lead and teach the church (1 Tim.3:2), and therefore those appointed should give evidence of leadership and teaching gifts from the Holy Spirit. Powers (s.a:176) notes the person who is appointed an elder must have a Christian character as is described in 1 Tim. 3:6-8.

Vorster (1999:44) proposes that in order for the elder to supervise the ministry of the Word and Sacraments effectively as in Acts 20:28-31, he must be a student of the Word of God all the time. This will help him to grow spiritually.

One important qualification of an elder in the New Testament is that he must be a person who is loyal to his wife signifying that he must be married in order to qualify to be elected as an elder. This is not the case for the RCZ because for one to be qualified to be elected to the office of an elder, one must have attained the age of 30 years whether single or married (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:28). The RCZ is found wanting again because any person who has been a member for more than one year is eligible for election and in the Rules and Regulations there is no mention of sound biblical doctrines.

Unlike Powers (1996:132) who clearly states that the New Testament clearly specifies that for one to assume the office of an elder, one must not only be married but must be able to manage one's family well, indicating that one is well-trained in the Word of God and can teach it well to others.

In addition, the elders must be men who show balance in everything, that is that they are self-controlled, wise and careful and have a good character in whatever they are doing (O'Donovan 1992:171).

An elder must also significantly have none of the following negative characteristics: not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, no lover of money (1 Tim 3:3), not arrogant, not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7), says Boice (1986:640). Leaders of the church must not have flaws of character that will harm their witnessing or cause suffering for the church of God.

According to Enns (2008:366) the qualifications of elders are expounded in detail in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. He argues that elders are branded with the following fifteen characteristics. These are as follows:

Above reproach: he is one who "can't be censored"; there is nothing in his life of which to accuse him. Husband of one wife: it does not mean "one at a time" (polygamy was unknown

among Greeks and Romans); he has not been divorced and remarried. Temperate: he is sober in judgement. Prudent: he is discreet, sound-minded. Respectable: he is well-balanced, not abrasive. Hospitable: he loves and hosts strangers. Able to teach: he discerns and communicates sound doctrine. Not addicted to wine: he does not linger at the table, drinking wine. Not pugnacious: he is not a fighter. Gentle: he is reasonable. Uncontentious: he avoids fighting. No lover of money: he is not greedy or irresponsible concerning money. Managing his own household, he attends to his own family so that they are believers and are orderly. Not a new convert; he is not a neophyte. Good reputation with unbelievers: he is respected in the community at large (Enns 2008:366)

The Bible is clear on the issue of who would be elders of the church during the New Testament times. The RCZ only mentions the age as the qualification of one to be elected into the office of the elder. The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:28) article 4 states that:

“Those to be elected to the office of an elder should have attained 30 years of age”.

The Bible mentions fifteen characteristics as qualifications for one to be elected to the office of an elder whilst the RCZ mentions only one qualification. Does this lead to an abnormal compromise in the system of church government in the RCZ? The researcher will try to evaluate this in the next chapter.

4.5.2.2.4 Appointment of Elders

In the New Testament, it is assumed that elders were appointed by the leaders of the church. Acts 14:23 says, *“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.”* The scenario was in Titus 1:5 where he was instructed by Paul to appoint elders at Crete. Through examining Acts 14:23, one can conclude that there was more than one elder in each local church in the New Testament. O’Donovan (1992:171) believes that any leadership of any local church should be in the hands of a group of elders, not just one person. This is so because the church belongs to Christ and not to any one person. Jesus Christ alone is the head of the church and He guides it through the use of

elders. The qualification for elders focus on three important aspect of a man's life: his moral behaviour, his knowledge of Christian doctrine, and his family life says Reed (2009:11). Appointment of elders refers to election and ordination and must fulfil the following biblical requirements such as personal behaviour, manages his family well, and must not be a recent convert (Anon. 2013:22). The newly elected elders are made to order to the care, protection and leadership of the Lord by prayer.

Powers (1996:134) is of the same contention when he argues that the choice of leaders in the Pauline churches seems to have been made by the existing leaders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:22 and Titus 1:5). Powers (1996:136) says:

“But the elders are always referred to in the New Testament in the plural in relation to their role in any particular church. Thus we note that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders (plural) in every church they had founded in South Galatia (Acts 14:23); the elders of Jerusalem are always referred to corporately in the plural (Acts 11:30; 15:2, 4, 5, 22, 23; 16:4; 21:18); Paul called elders of the church at Ephesus to come to him (Acts 20:17); Titus is to appoint elders in every town (Titus 1:5); the sick person is to call for the elders of the church (James 5:14).

This consistent repetition is a testimony of the New Testament pattern of what a church is like when we call it a congregation today which has a number of elders (depending on its size). The New Testament has mentioned the origin, functions, qualifications, and appointment of elders but not the term of appointment as elders. The New Testament is silent about that and this will leave us with questions which need some answers. However, this is not the subject matter of the research. Longman 111 (2014:253) says that elders in the New Testament church always functioned in a plural sense and never as individual leaders. James instructs the sick to call the elders of the church to come and pray for them (James 5:14).

As has been highlighted in this section, elders are the stewards of God's church, and the research will now assess the biblical evidence of the office of the deacon. The question to be attended to be as follows: What does the Bible say about the office of the deacon?

4.5.2.3 Office of the Deacon

This section will attend to the Biblical foundation for the office of the deacon; though this office is not part of the government system in the Reformed Churches, the researcher will adequately explain this office in his evaluation of the government system of the RCZ. Amongst other things, this section will give attention to the office of the deacon in the New Testament. In fact, the duties and qualifications of the deacons will be evaluated. A theological evaluation of the office of the deacon in the system of government will be discussed in ample detail in the next chapter. The discussion of the office of the deacon does not mean that the researcher supports what is being done in the government system in the RCZ. The Biblical foundation of this of shall be the guide of what should be taken into consideration, in other words this shall help us to have a clear cut of evaluating what is being done in the RCZ. At the end we shall be in a position to determine if the office of the deacon is mandated to participate in church government matters or in practical ministry in the congregation.

According to Elwell (1984:296) the beginnings of the formal office of the deacon may be traced to the Bible (Acts 6). It is presented as a problem which the distribution of aid led to the appointment of seven leaders who would free the apostles from “waiting on the tables” (Acts 6:6).

Cowen (2003:10) says that the word ‘deacon’ (*diakonos*) has three diverse connotations:

- The word ‘deacon’ refers to one who implements the command of another, such as a master. A deacon is also referred to as a servant.
- In the church, it refers to one who cares for the poor and has the responsibility of distributing the money allocated to them.
- It can refer to a waiter- one who serves food and drink (Cowen 2003:10; Baloyi 2016:41).

Baloyi (2016:41) has observed that the office of the deacon was instituted to lead the ministry of charity in the New Testament. This office was assigned by the church to take care of the poor and to distribute the money to those who are needy.

Williams (1972:119) describes a deacon as a church officer who has been given the mission of practical management in material matters to those people in need, regardless of their church affiliation. The story of Luke (Acts 6; 8:4-8) postulates that the task of deacons was to offer service while the twelve apostles were to preach and pray (Berghoef and De Koster, 1980:65). The sole obligation of the deacons was to wait and work on the tables while the twelve devoted themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer. The word diakonos can therefore be deciphered to mean ‘the ministry of service’.

McKee’s (1989:63)¹¹³ basic argument is that the office of the deacon was instituted to attend to the care of the poor and to minister to them in a holistic way. The starting- point of the office of the deacon is described by Luke in Acts 6:1-6 as follows:

In those days when the number of the disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve [apostles] gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on the tables. Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word.” This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them (cf. Baloyi 2016:45).

¹¹³ McKee is an associate professor in Church History at Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, and Massachusetts.

The office of deacon was established to help the apostles to function effectively in their teaching and preaching ministry. McKee (1989:63-64) notes that this office of the deacon is a liberated office because nowhere in the Bible is it referred to as an office of subordinate elders.

The foundation of the office of the deacon was to exterminate the controversy which existed in the church and the apostles wanted to get the church back on course in fulfilling its obligation:

“So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

Two roles of the office of the deacon can be discerned in the New Testament, namely the distribution of alms (service of charity/mercy) and the administration of charity. Vorster (1999:45) states that article 25 of the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa says:

The essence of the office of deacon is to conscientiously collect the money and goods given to the poor as gifts of love and to distribute these gifts diligently, after joint deliberation, according to the needs of both the needy and other church members. It is also their duty to visit and comfort those in need and to ensure that the gifts are not wrongly applied. The deacons must report to the church council about their activities and, if so desired, to the congregation as well when the church council considers it appropriate.

The Church Order emphasizes the main duties of the deacons in material and spiritual matters.¹¹⁴ Longman 111(2014:253) is of the opinion that deacons provide practical, hands-on ministry in the local church and the standard understanding of the deacons in the New Testament church structure, is that they assisted the elders in practical ways as explained in the Bible (Acts 6:1-6).

¹¹⁴

1. The collection of contributions for the poor.
2. The distribution of these contributions.
3. To act communally to prevent injustices and disorderliness
4. To do house visitation with the sole purpose of comforting those in need with the Word of God and to inspire Christians to take care of the needy.
5. To report to the church council and, if necessary, to the congregation about their work.
6. To work not only in the congregation but for all in need (Gal. 6:10)

According to McKee (1989:154), the Bible states that in both Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Tim.3:8-13 the office of deacon is charged with the collection, and administration of the church resources as well as looking after the poor. Gamble (1992:168) confirms the view of McKee (1989, described above that the office of the deacon was established as a ministry to offer service to the poor. Therefore, both McKee and Gamble agree on the Scriptural basis of the office of the deacon and conclude that the office of the deacon was a necessity and a permanent office in the early church (Cf. also Baloyi 2016:46).

The sense of duty of the deacon in the New Testament church was to draw together donations and money for the underprivileged and those in need and to dispense these materials to those in need. Peterson, (2009:232) says, deacons were chosen to serve the tables by doing practical ministry of serving and uplifting the widows, the sick and the needy in the church and those in the community. McKee holds that the main purposes of the deacons are the gatherings and government of resources of the church to meet the needs of the underprivileged and the sick (McKee, 1989:64).

The responsibility of deacons, according to Grudem (1994:919), embraced the sharing of food to the widows who were in need and to care for the deprived. This understanding is also supported by Baloyi (2016:48) who states that the expression ‘to wait on the tables’ from the context of a deacon’s responsibilities from the biblical viewpoint, is the gathering and control of gifts from the congregation for the poor and the sharing of these donations.

The seven were chosen to oblige at the tables, in other words their calling was to distribute the food to the poor and those in need (Cowen 2003:112). Deacons are called in the church to prevent poverty, as well as to minister it because God’s yearning is to see the orphans, widows, the poor and the suffering being taken care of, says Berghoef and De Korster (1980:89).

In Matthew 25:35-43, the disciples are admonished to feed the hungry, comfort the sick and visit those in prisons. This is not optional for the deacons to visit and care for the sick but it is a command for them to do so as it is written in the Bible, argues De Jong (1952:187). Our case in point is that our Lord Jesus Christ in his earthly ministry, preached the Word, comforted the

bereaved, and healed the sick as well as fed those who were hungry. In other terms deacons may also be referred to as the Church's ministers of mercy because they are to show Christ's mercy to those who are in need, argues Cowen (2003:114).

Baloyi (2016:55) purports that the New Testament Church shows that deacons were not only focused upon preaching the Word and prayers, but she (the Church) was also concerned with the poor and the troubled. One of the duties of the deacons was the collection of gifts for the poor and the management and administration of this relief.

Deacons were appointed to distribute food. What is interesting, is that even though they were appointed to distribute food, they were also supposed to be full of the Holy Spirit - a wisdom (Acts 6:3) alluded to by O'Donovan (1996:173).

Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Timothy 3:8-12 have a list of biblical qualifications for the office of deacon. These qualifications are listed as follows: honest, good report, being filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, being a husband of one wife, ruling his children and own house well.

O'Donovan (1996:173) and Cowen (2003:105) are in agreement that Paul's letter to Timothy offers a more comprehensive list of the qualifications of deacons in the New Testament (1 Tim. 3:8-12). Paul argues that a deacon must be a person who rises over and above in three areas of life, viz., personal character, spiritual life and Christian experience. The church, as was the case in the New Testament, had to look out for able men and engage them to the office of deacon as written in Acts 6, and 1 Tim. 3 (Baloyi 2016:60).

A close appraisal of 1 Tim. 3:2, 11-13 clearly shows that deacons are to bring spiritual comfort to the members they are caring for. The qualifications or qualities of deacons mentioned in 1 Tim 3:8-13 are the same as those of the elders except that of the ability to teach as mentioned in 1 Tim.3:2 (Fiore 1991:82). Moreover he maintains that a deacon must be a man of one wife, with no love of money, managing his house well, not given to excessive wine-drinking, a man of the highest principle and not indulging in double-talk (Fiore 1991:82).

For one to qualify for the office of deacon, one must be a person of an all-encompassing acquaintance of the faith (cf. 1 Tim. 3:9; 13) that, *“they must keep hold of the deep truth of the faith with a clear conscience”*. As written in 1 Tim.3:8ff: *“Deacons likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine and pursuing dishonest gain....the husband of one wife”* says Powers (1996:153). Hale (1996:814) confirms the view of Powers (1996, described above) by saying that before choosing one to the office of deacon it is necessary to look at one’s family and if one cannot control one’s family and exercise authority in that family, it means that one will do the same in the Church of Christ.

Cowen (2003:106) maintains that the family life of the deacon’s family must be a testimony to other families because they are not living in an isolation with other families as was the case in the New Testament. Deacons must prove themselves to the congregation as it is written in 1 Tim.3:10 whether their way of life qualifies them to this office. He (Cowen) mentions that they should, *“not be greedy for money”*, this was so because they handled a lot of money and gifts to be distributed to those in need. The assumption is that if they are greedy the possibility of converting those gifts to their personal use is very high, and they will neglect the rightful recipients. Deacons must be honest people (Cowen, 2003:108).

According to Hendriksen (1957:130) deacons must be men full of faith and of the Holy Spirit and their special task is to collect the offerings. He (Hendrickson) mentioned seven qualifications as they are found in 1 Tim. 3:8-12.

Deacons must be men of dignity. The New Testament verses indicate that Paul wrote to Titus in chapter 2:2 saying:

Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and endurance.

In Acts 6:5 when seven men were selected to take care of the distribution of food, Stephen¹¹⁵ was referred to as “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit.” Deacons must be dignified people because they represent God and deal with God’s people, says Bruce (1990:120). Powers (1996:153) says that deacons must be men full of respect. This is also indicated in the New Testament Scriptures by Paul when he wrote to the Philippians in chapter 4:8 saying:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- if anything is excellent and praiseworthy-think about such things.

As seen above, a lot has been written on dignity according to the teachings of the New Testament especially from the writings of Paul. This research shall therefore try to link these teachings with the qualifications of the deacons.

Deacons, according to the teachings of the Bible must be people who do not say one thing to one person and say something different to another person (Hendriksen, 1957:130). The Bible has examples of people who were double-tongued (2 Kings 5:19-27¹¹⁶; Neh. 6:2¹¹⁷; Acts 5:8)¹¹⁸.

As seen from the Scriptures above, deacons must not be people who always change what has already been said.

Boice (1986:6 32-633) argues that deacons must not be doubled-tongued because they are closely involved in the lives of many people so their tongue must be under control, even more so than that of others. This will help them to avoid gossiping.

The qualified deacon in the New Testament (1 Tim. 3:3) must be moderate in his use of wine if he drinks any, Hendriksen maintains (1957:130).

¹¹⁵ Stephen the only one mentioned to be full of faith and the Holy Spirit... but they were seven who were elected to wait on the Tables.

¹¹⁶ 2 Kings 5:19-29 the story of Gehazi

¹¹⁷ Nehemiah 6:2 the story of Sanballat and Geshem scheming to harm Nehemiah.

¹¹⁸ The story of Ananias and his wife Saphira who lied to the Holy Spirit about what they had brought to the Apostles after selling their property.

Deacons handle a lot of money and gifts that are to be distributed to the people in need and, therefore, the Bible discourages them to be greedy. Baloyi (2016:63) argued that if deacons are greedy they can convert the gifts in their care to personal gain instead of giving them to the people who are to be taken care of. Therefore deacons must be honest people. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:2-3:

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them-not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be, not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock

Truly, deacons must not forget the nature of their calling and focus on acquiring money and use their office to gain wealth for themselves, says Eaton (1999:108).

According to Hendriksen (1957:131), a good deacon is attentive to his duty for Christ's sake. He maintains that for Christ's sake the qualified deacon should watch himself scrupulously, doing all in his power to remain in the closest possible union with Christ who is the head of the Church (Hendriksen 1957:132).

The spiritual conviction of deacons should set an example to others in order for them to convince those they are witnessing to. Deacons must be in a position to have the spirit of discernment in order to be able to identify people who are in need (Guthrie 1990:96).

It is claimed that deacons must gain an excellent standing in the eyes of the community and the congregation so that they will have great assurance in their faith as they bear witness to Jesus Christ (Hale 1996:815). De Jong (1953:100) mentions that deacons should first of all be tested and present proof that they can serve as deacons, that is that they are blameless as Paul writes in his first letter to Timothy chapter 3:10, saying:

They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

Powers (1996:155) and Baloyi (2016:63) are in agreement that deacons must be tested first and if they are found to be blameless they can be chosen as deacons. This claim is based on the above-mentioned verse. However, the Bible is silent about the expiry of the office of the deacon. According to Van der Borgh (2007:74-75) those to be chosen to the office of the deacon must be people of sound Christian doctrine.

The election of deacons (see Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3) is the duty of the congregation, and the Church council will make the final nominations, says Hale (1996:814). Van der Borgh (2007:75) declares that deacons were called to office through the election by elders after prayer and fasting with the help of the congregation.

A deacon must be a husband of one wife, with no other woman in his life who would be intimate with him in whatever way whether physical or emotional.

The wife of a deacon must be person who is dignified - that is she must not be a slanderer, but she must be a sober-minded person in all her dealings.

1 Tim. 3:12 explicitly states that a deacon must be a spiritual father/leader of his wife and children. He is the priest of the family, meaning that the way he cares for his family must bear testimony to the community, the society and the congregation as well.

The offices of the minister of the Word, elder and deacon are explained comprehensively in the Bible and each office is there for a purpose. It is true that they do not exist to compete with one another but to complement one another for the edification of the body of Christ. Because of this the researcher will now examine the system of government which operated in the New Testament.

4.6 New Testament Church Government

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church and He is the one with supreme authority because he was very clear in His Word concerning how He wished His church on earth to be. Paul states it clearly to the Church at Ephesus (1:22-23) where he said:

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

As we read through the New Testament scriptures, our experience is that Christ is the head of the Church and therefore in any government of the church one must acknowledge what is written in the above verse that everything has been placed under his feet, meaning Jesus Christ. Christ used the local church in the New Testament to manage and organize his church.

4.6.1 Local church

As already discussed above, Paul stated this administration clearly in his letter to Titus 1:5 when he instructed him to appoint elders to lead the local congregation. It was clear that the local church is to be autonomous, with the right to self-government. The church must be free from any outside control and have a freedom from the meddling of any hierarchical organisations.

Du Plooy (2015:12) maintains that each local church is an autonomous legal entity which is under the supervision of the local church council. A unique relationship exists between the different local churches in the light of their unity in doctrine and church government with the result that local churches meet in major assemblies (Du Plooy, 2015:12). No local church may rule over another local church. The churches assist one another in the governance of the church and decide together on difficult issues (Du Plooy, 2015:13). This system of church government has its origin from the teachings of the New Testament's church government. The RCZ's government system describes the issue of autonomous and self- government in relation to the church as a denomination, not the local church (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:21).

According to Hendriksen (1957:344) the appointing of elders was to care for the work of grace amongst the congregations of Crete which had been started by Paul. There is no indication of whom they were supposed to report to. The only things mentioned by Paul were that these elders had to be people of good character as already discussed in the office of elders in the previous paragraphs. The researcher has noted that in the New Testament the church is to be governed by spiritual leadership made up of two offices, viz. the offices of the elder and of the deacon, though

the latter is not part of the church government system in most Reformed Churches and in the New Testament.

The Bible, especially the New Testament, teaches that leadership consists of multiple elders and a group of deacons who serve the church. The other term which is used interchangeably with elders, is that of bishops and overseers.

According to Barclay (1966:103) one group of elders in the local churches consists of those who are called by God to be pastors or teachers and some who are called to be missionaries and evangelists as mentioned in Acts 13-14. This is the story of the first missionary journey where Paul and Barnabas were set apart for the purpose of preaching the gospel. The plurality of elders in the New Testament shows that they had different functions, that is, pastors who are called to serve in the pastoral ministry whilst the elders are given authority in decision-making. The New Testament, especially Paul's letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 3:1-13) mentions two offices but in the government system of the local church, they are three offices.

According to Reymond (2004:143) the issue of major assemblies was there in the New Testament times, and the primary text is Acts 15. Reed (2009:25) declares that in Acts 15 an assembly was convened in Jerusalem, where "apostles and elders came together for to consider the matter of dispute". The conflict was discussed, resolved, and authoritative "decrees" were issued by the council says Reed (2009:26). In his writings Reymond referred to Antioch as a presbytery which appealed to the Jerusalem Council. Paul and Barnabas were sent as delegates to represent Antioch in all deliberations. At this gathering there were apostles and elders and no deacons were present. Allison (2011:589) asserts that when the church of Antioch faced controversy, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, and 22). In this case Antioch can be referred as a local assembly and Jerusalem as a major or broader assembly. On this note deacons are not mentioned in this chapter which is an indication that in the New Testament's principles of church government they are not included. The Bible is no silent about church government in the local church and major

assemblies because consultation meetings were held where mutual interests were discussed (Acts 15:1-31; Matthew 20:25:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4) says Anon (2013:24).

4.6.2 Church offices

Vorster (1999:35) explains church offices as follows:

The three offices in the church are not subordinate to each other. Each office bears its own responsibility as instrument in the broad ministry of Christ.

He argued that the offices and the office-bearers are equal in the respective ministries of the Word. The equality of church offices in the New Testament was respected. The issue of equality of office-bearers will be evaluated in the next chapter in order for us to see whether the RCZ's system of church government is still relevant to the teachings of the Bible and the principles of the Reformed teachings. The authority of offices is given to the congregation by Christ and that same authority is given to broader assemblies hence there is no flow of authority downward or upwards says Reymond (2004:148)

The office of the minister/pastor in the Scriptures entails that the person is responsible for teaching the Word, admonishing, guiding and exhorting the congregation (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Acts 14:23).

According to Vorster (1999:43) the office of the minister is closely linked to the office of the elder because just after the ascension of Jesus Christ, the apostles performed all the duties, which makes out the government of the church, i.e. the preaching of the gospel, praying for the congregants and the administering of the sacraments. The office of the elder is responsible for the supervision of the ministry of the Word and supervision of the life, work and doctrinal viewpoints of all the other office-bearers in the church (Vorster, 1999:44).

It is argued that the office of the deacons is to ensure that the congregation actively practises its unity in Christ in mutual love. Their mission is to visit everyone in the community and, according to Scripture, to equip and activate mutual love for everyone, especially fellow

believers, and furthermore to assure that no- one is estranged from the community of believers. The collection must be gathered carefully, and distributed wisely within the comfort of Scripture. The deacons must report their actions to the church counsel, and if necessary, report to the congregation according to the instruction on the church council¹¹⁹.

A closer look at this article shows that it has its origin in Acts 6:1-6 where the deacons were appointed by the apostles who, by then, were functioning as elders. Their functions were set out by the apostles.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed what the Bible says concerning the teachings of the doctrine of church government in relation to the RCZ as an organization. The discussion addressed the third objective that aimed at identifying the biblical principles of the doctrine of church government of the RCZ as an institution. The research demonstrated that the church is identified in a number of ways viz. The church as the people of God, the church as the body of Christ and the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit. The study also pointed out that the officers in the New Testament appeared in two categories. The first category was mentioned by the apostle, Paul in a letter to Ephesus (Ephesians 4:11-12).

The second category refers to the officers who were also mentioned by Apostle Paul in his letter to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:1-13) and Titus (1:5-9). The finding of this study is that every office - bearer is an instrument in the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ and is therefore responsible to Christ who is the head of the Church. The study also held that three offices in the church, as stated in the New Testament, are also not subordinate to one another. Each office bears its own obligation as an apparatus in the broad government of Jesus Christ.

¹¹⁹ Article 25 of the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa. The article refers to the office of the deacons.

The discussion demonstrated that the local church under the spiritual leadership of the minister of the Word, elders and deacons is complete and is an autonomous legal entity under the supervision of the church council. In the New Testament there is mention of major assemblies in the book of Acts (Acts 15) where we read about the Council at Jerusalem, people from different areas who gathered and discussed what was taking place in their places concerning the preaching of the Word. The findings endorse that the RCZ needs to revisit its policies to align its system of church government with the principles of the Bible.

Based upon the findings of this chapter, the next chapter will present the merits and demerits of the theological system of church government of the RCZ. The teachings of the Bible and the Reformed teachings on the systems of church government should form the foundation for the establishment of the RCZ.

CHAPTER 5: THE RELEVANCE OF THE RCZ'S CHURCH GOVERNMENT

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter displays the dynamics of the biblical concept of the doctrine of church government and the study has proved that the government of the church during the New Testament era was solely the responsibility of the minister of the Word and the elders. This chapter aims to answer the research question: *“What are the merits or demerits of the RCZ’s system of church government as expressed in the Bible since the inception of the Church Order of Dort 1619?”* In the process of answering this question, the researcher will endeavour to address the following research objective: *“To identify the relevance of the RCZ’s system of church government to the Church Order of Dort 1619 which was formulated at the Synod of Dort 1618-1619.”* The study wants to evaluate the church government of the RCZ in comparison with that of other Reformed Churches that also trace the origin of their Church Orders from the Church Order of Dort 1619 and the biblical concept of church government.

According to Walk (1998:45) as stated in chapter 1 section 1.7.3 of this study, a comparative analysis in research must be applied. This methodological research design is used to enhance the confidence in the findings of this study. Magwa and Magwa (2017:39) believe that this methodology is used as a general term to cover discussions on approaches used on data analysis. In this way, a comparison of the teachings of the Bible and the reformed teachings of church government as founded in the Church Order of Dort 1619 versus the system in the RCZ’s church government, is traced. In this chapter, a literature study will be done on different church orders such as the Church Order of Dort 1619, the Church Order of the RCSA, and the Bible, in contrast to that in the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*. Certain Church Order articles will be investigated to glean guidelines for the standard structure of church government for the Reformed Churches across the board.

5.2 Reformed Church governance

According to Schaff (1882:338) John Calvin is the founder of church government in all the Reformed Churches across the world. This was supported by Johnson (1900:49-50) and Bouwman (2000:30) who declared that Calvin had built his understanding of the reformed church on the establishment which had been started by Bucer underscoring the office of all believers. The Reformed system of church government has its starting- point in Geneva whilst the Presbyterian system of church government was prejudiced by the Westminster teachings and the developments of church government from Scotland (Bouwman, 2000:29). Zeze (2012:71) notes that the phrase “*Reformed church government/polity*” was first used in the 16th century to describe those involved in the movement of Protestantism to transform the Roman Catholic Church when this was barred from creating its own churches.

De Ridder (1983:19) defines Reformed church governance as a system of church government whereby the church council is made up of the minister of the Word, the elders and the deacons. Zeze (2012:73) purports that De Ridder’s definition is the summary of the first part of article 30 of the *Belgic Confession*:

We believe that this true Church must be governed according to the Spiritual order which our Lord has taught us in His Word. There should be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments; there should also be elders and deacons who, together with the pastors, form the council of the Church. By these means they preserve the true religion; they see to it that the true doctrine takes its course, that evil men are disciplined in a spiritual way and are restrained, and also that the poor and all the afflicted are helped and comforted according to their need. By these means everything will be done well and in good order when faithful men are chosen in agreement with the rule that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy.

All three offices are mentioned in this article that constitutes the government of the church. Zeze (2012:77), concludes that the Reformed Church government is both anti-hierarchical and anti-independent, promoting both autonomy of the local church and the need to cooperate within the federation, based on the church government articles in their confessional documents, the Belgic

Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort, together with the Church Order adopted by the Synod of Dort (1618-1619).

Du Plooy (2014:5) argues that Calvin is regarded as one of the most prolific engineers of the Reformed churches and the founder of the reformed church government. The argument here is that Calvin was much more influential in the formulation of the Reformed Church government even though others also contributed. Calvin refined the teachings of Bucer who viewed the Word of God and the Holy Spirit as one that leads the church by using office-bearers as a means by which Christ governs his Church (Paas, 2007:182).

Ekitala¹²⁰ (2018:23) says:

The Reformed church government is characterized by a method of ecclesiastical assemblies, namely the consistory (church council), the classis (presbytery), and the synod. These may be in ascending or descending order. These assemblies are representative; with elders who are freely-elected, attending with their pastors. The consistory comprises the pastor and elders of the local church. The classis is made up of the pastor and one elder from each local church. The synod consists of an equal number of elders and ministers of the Word from classis.

Based on the quotation above, the RCZ does not consider the office of the deacon as a member of church government if it is not in line with the teachings of the Reformed church governance. According to Bouwman (2000:30) the system of Reformed church government is elder-centred as we read in 1 Tim. 5:17 which speaks of the plurality of elders.

The Bible as the Word of God is the source of the main guidelines which outline the principles of church government. Coertzen (2004:132) and Zeze (2012:96) speak of a number of Reformed theologians¹²¹ who agree that the Bible is the primary source of the Reformed church government.

According to Zeze (2012:98) he concludes that the Bible in its absolute authority, is the only primary source of church government and practice and the final court of appeal in the Church.

¹²⁰ Luka Ariko Ekitala did his Doctor of Philosophy (Ecclesiology) in the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University.

¹²¹ He mentions W.D. Jonker, H Ridderbos, H Bouwman and C.J. Smit

5.3 Literature study on church government

Schwarz (1995:186) distinguishes/indicates that the Presbyterian Church government is intended for churches which are subject to presbyteries made up of clergy and lay members (elders) of local churches within the district or region, as in Presbyterian and Reformed churches. In this type of church government there is no hierarchical post. Clarke (2008:78-100) makes a distinction between hierarchical leadership, egalitarianism, and servant leadership. He (Clarke) argues that hierarchical leadership involves a certain status and with that status, a certain authority for leaders.

The Church Order of Dort 1619¹²², Article 1 states that:

For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments, and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; of these matters the following article treats them in due order. This article was formulated through the quoting of a Scripture verse from the Bible. The principle of church government from the New Testament is derived from 1 Corinthians 14:40 which says: "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

The Church Order of Dort 1619 was formulated with the application of this principle to the organization of the church and the checks and balances that seek to ensure that fittingness/suitability (Henderson, 1962:110-111; Church Order and its supplements, 2011:8).

Another interesting point to be taken note of in this Article is that of maintaining good order in the Church of Christ. Christ is recognised as the head of the Church. Christ exercises his lordship in the church through his Word and Spirit. The Spirit of Christ is the life of the church (Clowney, 1976:30-31).

Vorster (1999:15) affirms that in the Presbyterian system of church government the main principle is the rule of Christ through the Word and Spirit by means of the offices. This is also supported by the article of the Church Order and its supplements of the Christian Reformed

¹²² Church Order of Dort (1619) drawn up in the National Synod of Dort (held in 1618 and 1619) and accepted as a concord of ecclesiastic community by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

Church in North America, that states: “The Christian Reformed Church, confessing its complete subjection to the Word of God and the Reformed creeds as a true interpretation of this Word, acknowledging Christ as the only head of his church, and desiring to honour the apostolic injunction that in the churches, “everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way”¹²³ (1 Cor. 14:40), regulates its ecclesiastical organization and activities in the following articles of the Church Order and its supplements, (2011:11).

The point of departure in Reformed church government is Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. Similarly, the Church Order of the RCSA (2017:2) acknowledges that the Synod of Reddersburg accepted the church order of Dordrecht 1618/1619 for the church government of the Reformed Churches in South Africa. Several synods, in accordance with article 86¹²⁴ amended this as follows:

To maintain good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, supervision over doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and church discipline.

The Church Order of Dort 1619, i.e., the Church Order and its supplements- and the Church Order of the RCSA start with the same statement of acknowledging Christ as the head of the church who governs it through the Word and Spirit by means of the offices. This is not the case with the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:7), for its salutation starts with the background information which says:

The Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ) was planted through the mission work of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC- Cape Synod) from South Africa. The DRC was a fruit of the Protestant Reformed movement established in Europe. The RCZ was started on 9 September 1891 at Morgenster Mission in Masvingo province and is a Reformed faith and Presbyterian organisation. It was first named African Reformed Church on 9 September 1952. Its faith is centred on the Bible and the believers’ personal relationship with God in Christ through the Holy

¹²³ Church Order and its supplements (2011: 11).

¹²⁴ Article 86 of the Church Order of RCSA reads: These Articles, relating to the legal order of the Church and having been drafted and adopted by common consent, may and ought to be modified, augmented or reduced, if the interests of the church require it. However, no particular church, classis or synod, may do so but shall endeavour to uphold these Articles until it be otherwise ordained by the general synod.

Spirit. The following is an agreement no.125 between the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the African Reformed Church which later changed its name to the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe at the Synod held at Gutu on 18-25 August 1981.

The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017) referred to as the “*Constitution, Rules, and Regulations of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe*” is considered to be the Church Order of the RCZ. The researcher contends that the RCZ should formulate the Church Order which salutes Christ as the Head of the Church. This is set against the background of Article 48 of the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:36) where the moderator is addressed as the leader of the church.

Like all other Church Orders mentioned above, the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* should also begin by acknowledging Christ as the head of the church, and then the contents of the Church Order are to be dealt with as follows:

- The offices
- The assemblies
- The supervision of doctrine, sacraments, and ceremonies
- The Christian discipline (Vorster, 1999:15).

Of all the four aspects of the Church Order only the first two will be attended to in order for the study to answer the research question about the merits and demerits in the RCZ’s church government system, as well as, inter *alia*, the teachings of the Bible and the articles of the Church Orders which were formulated against the background of the Church Order of Dort 1619.

God uses the group of dynamics within the church to develop the government structures. Barentsen (2011: 32) and Ndlovu (2018:187) say leadership is a group phenomenon but in the process it should be determined by the principles from the Word of God.

¹²⁵ This refers to the deed of agreement which was signed in 1976 between the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the African Reformed Church in Rhodesia (DRC). The deed of agreement was effected on 4 May 1977 and both sides were represented by the Moderator, Vice Moderator, Actuary, and General Secretary. This event took place in Cape Town, South Africa.

5.3.1 The Offices

According to the *Church Order* of Dort 1619, article 2, there are four kinds of offices in the church, namely, the office of the minister of the Word, office of the Professor of theology, office of the elder and office of the deacons. Du Plooy (1998:193) argues that church polity must outline a system of church government which provides the conduit for the true doctrine through which the church can be built up. Furthermore, Du Plooy (1998:193) says:

It is therefore significant that the classification and content of the Reformed church orders (such as that of Dordt in 1618/1619) must correspond with the kingdom of God, and thus with the hallmarks¹²⁶ of the true church. The focus is on the proclamation of the Word, the administering of the sacraments and the exercise of the discipline in the church.

What is interesting in the above statement of Du Plooy's is that what he refers to are the tasks of the office of the minister of the Word and the office of the elder. Where is the deacon? Hanko (1962:8) also purports that Article 2 says the offices are of three kinds: the minister of the Word, of the elders and of the deacons. Through the offices Christ exercises His authority in the church through men. Hanko (1962:9) argues that the office of Professor of theology was removed in 2000 because it was considered as being part of the office of the ministry. Therefore, there are three offices established by Christ in the church. These offices reflect the three-fold offices of Christ who is the head of the church. Janssen (2000:16) appreciates that the Reformed people have often claimed that the three-fold office derives from the three-fold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. Zeze (2012:114) notes that the New Testament period has three primary offices: no more, no less: Ministers, Elders, and Deacons representing Christ as a Prophet, Priest, and King.

On the other hand, the *Church Order* of the RCSA article 2, mentions that there are four types of offices: the minister of the Word, professors of Theological School, elders and deacons. Vorster (1999:15) concurs with article 2 of the Church Order of the RCSA and goes further to say that the offices in the church are the instruments in the hands of Christ through which He institutes,

¹²⁶ Hallmarks can be defined as the marks, seals, trademarks, assurances, promises or symbols.

conserves and builds his Church. It is argued that He uses different ministries for this purpose. They are organs in the hands of Christ which are used to build up the congregation (Vorster, 1999:15¹²⁷). The execution of Christ's church government takes place by means of the Word, the Holy Spirit, and through the people's ministry which entails the offices. Even though Christ uses the Word, the Holy Spirit and the offices, it does not mean that the offices can be equated to the Word and the Spirit, says Coertzen (2004:99).

Vorster (1999:35) in summary, indicates that none of the four offices in the Church is subordinate to the other but, inter alia, complement one another. Therefore, every office-bearer in the church is an instrument in the hands of Jesus Christ and can therefore be held accountable to Christ. No office is more important than another. In the Reformed church government system there is equality of offices. These offices are mentioned as follows: the minister of the Word, the elders and the deacons says Pali (2018:6).

The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:28) mentions the offices of the church council which are the minister of the Word, Evangelists, Youth Counsellors, elders and deacons. The Church Orders of other Reformed Churches do not mention the office of Evangelists or that of the Youth Counsellors. The researcher will attempt by whatever regular means to settle the research question which aims to establish the relevance of the church government of the RCZ against the background of the teachings of the New Testament and the *Church Order* of Dort 1619.

In conclusion the *Church Orders* of the Reformed Churches mention four offices, which are the office of the minister of the Word, the professor of Theological School, the office of elder and the office of the deacon. The researcher agrees with Hanko (1962:9) who holds that Christ instituted three offices in the church which resemble the offices in the Old Testament, namely that of the Prophet (Minister of the Word), the King (elder) and the Priest (deacon). The offices of the minister of the Word and that of the professor of the Theological School are the same thing because both deal with the ministry of the Word. Attention is now given to each office;

¹²⁷ It is noted that those in offices are not dignitaries with authority based on their higher office, but first of all they are believers in the service of Christ as the first and last authority for the whole Church. The offices are necessary in the Church because Christ regards them necessary (Eph. 4:10, 11; 2 Cor 5:19; Rom 10:15).

ample attention, however, will be directed upon those offices which participate in the government of the church. In chapter 3 the study showed that the office of the minister of the Word and the elder, are the offices which should participate in church government. This is similar to that in chapter 4 where the principles of the church government in the Bible also prove that the offices of the minister and the elders are the only offices to participate in church government.

5.3.1.1 The Office of the Minister of the Word

The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:28) article 1 acknowledges three governing offices, the office of the minister, the office of the elder, and the office of the deacon. This is against the background of the Presbyterian and Reformed Church polity. Zeze (2012:115) mentions that the office of the deacons is not explicitly mentioned as an office that constitutes part of the governing body of the local Church.

The office of the minister of the Word was introduced in the RCZ by the missionaries after the ordination of A. A. Louw who went to Zimbabwe as a missionary and was ordained at Stellenbosch on 21 March, 1894 (Van der Merwe, 1981:56). The role of the office of the minister of the Word in the RCZ, is outlined in Article 18, as follows:

- To preach the Word
- To teach Catechism
- To administer the sacraments
- To lead the worship service
- To solemnize marriages
- To train Catechism teachers
- To receive and induct new members in the presence of the elders
- To take care of house visitation and the comforting of the bereaved

- To be the chairperson of the church council
- To prepare a preaching roster for the congregation
- To supervise Sunday School classes
- To be an ex-officio member of all committees in the congregation
- To be the point- person of the congregation
- To bury the deceased (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:30-31).

The Church order of Dort 1619 article 16 defines the task of the minister of the Word, as follows:

The office of the ministers of the Word is to continue in prayer and in the Ministry of the Word, to dispense the sacraments, to watch over their brethren, the elders and deacons, as well as the congregation, and finally to work with the elders; and furthermore to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order²⁸.

The same is also said in article 16 of the Church Order of the RCSA. Vorster (1999:33) notes that the office of the minister of the Word doesn't have any claim to the higher authority as is the case in secular life. He must be a servant. The minister and the elders constitute the church council over which he executes church discipline and is responsible for the orderliness in the congregation.

He (Vorster, 1999:33) and the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:30-31) acknowledge that in the official preaching, the catechism classes, parish visiting and pastorate, he is the minister of the Word who instructs, encourages and admonishes the believers of the Word.

Considering the Church Order of Dort 1619 and the Church Order of the RCSA, the office of the minister of the Word in the RCZ does not violate the tasks as they are stipulated in these Church Orders and the teachings of the Bible.

¹²⁸ Cf. Chapter 4. Sub-heading 4.5.2.1.1 where the election and duties are explained according to the principles of the Bible.

The issue of equality among offices in the church government is of paramount importance. The Church Order of Dort 1619 article 17 and the Church Order of the RCSA articles 17 and 84, state that among ministers of the Word, equality shall be maintained with respect to the duties of their office and also in other matters as far as possible, according to the judgement of the consistory, and, if necessary, of the Classis, which equality shall be maintained in the case of elders and deacons (RCSA Church Order, 2017:60).

The Bible and the Church Orders of the Reformed Churches do not acknowledge any hierarchical system of church government. Taking into consideration the article mentioned above the authority of the church is vested in the local church. The creation of permanent posts for ministers of the Word in the RCZ somehow creates hierarchical positions in the Church¹²⁹. This will be discussed in this chapter when the researcher deals with the major assemblies of the RCZ.

In terms of the tasks of the minister of the Word, the RCZ has not yet deviated from the teachings of the Bible and the Church Order of Dort 1619 concerning the issues of church government.

The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* is silent about the equality of offices except when mentioning those who make resolutions in the church council. Ordained ministers, elders and deacons are the only people who are allowed to make resolutions and exercise church discipline in the RCZ (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:15). The equality of offices will be discussed later in the chapter.

5.3.1.2 The Office of Church Elder

Zeze (2012:177) believes that , “*The New Testament refers a number of times to elders who served in the role of church leadership (Acts 14:23; 11:30; 15:2; 1 Tim 5:1,19; Titus 1:5; Acts 11:11, 30)*” The origin of this office is from the Bible as already mentioned in the above verses and the Church Order of Dort 1619 is not spared if we are discussing the office of the elder in the Reformed Churches.

¹²⁹ Cf. 5.4.2.2. Presbytery Executive is discussed.

In the RCZ the office of the elder was instituted simultaneously with the establishment of congregations. Van der Merwe (1981:78) believes that in 1909 *Vakuru*¹³⁰, meaning elders, were appointed to help the missionaries exercise church discipline in accordance with the rules which were laid down by the mission council.

The missionaries started with the office of the elder when they were establishing local Church councils. There were no deacons. The RCSA Church Order (2017:18) , in article 22 outlines that the elders will be chosen according to the judgement of the Consistory and the deacons, so that every church will be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to present to the congregation as many elders as are needed ; this, so that they may be installed with public prayers and stipulations after being approved by, and with the assent of, the congregation, unless any obstacle should arise, or twice the number of elders needed may be present, half of whom are to be chosen by the congregation, and installed in the office in the same manner, according to the form for this purpose.

The elders are elected within the congregation. The Bible (1 Tim 3:1-7) has expressed it clearly that those elected to this office must be people of good standing in all areas of life.

The Church Order of the RCSA, article 23 defines the task of the office of church elder as follows:

The office of the elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 with their duty being in common with that of the ministers of the Word, is to take heed that the ministers, together with their other fellow-helpers and deacons, faithfully discharge their office; and, insofar as circumstances of time and place permit, to do house visitation both before and after the Lord's Supper for the edification of the congregation, particularly in order to comfort and instruct the members of the congregation, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian faith(RCSA Church order, 2017:18).

¹³⁰ *Vakuru* refers to senior people who are old. *Vakuru* was a Shona word which was used to denote church elders who were appointed by missionaries to help them with the governance of the church. Nowadays they are called *Mutariri* for a singular and *Vatariri* for the plural. This word refers to a person who looks after other people like a watchman.

With this background in mind RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:31) mentions three tasks of the office of elder in the church. These are laid down as follows:

- They should watch over the spiritual life of the congregation
- They should guard the doctrines of the church and those of the ministers of the Word.
- Together with the minister of the Word they should do house-visitation in whatever way possible.

The RCZ mentions only three functions of elders in the church in comparison to more than ten functions of elders mentioned in the Bible¹³¹.

Verstraelen-Gilhuis (1982:77) maintains that the tasks of elders in the church are to watch over the spiritual life of the congregations, to visit the sick, or, indeed all church members especially the sick, the bereaved, marginalised, elderly, and backsliders. Elders, together with the minister of the Word, decide together with the minister, about the admission to Catechism class and baptism.

Vorster (1999:44) provides synopses of the church government of the office of elder in four themes:

- To supervise the ministry of the Word and Sacraments (Acts 20:28-31). For this reason the elder himself must be a student of the Word of God.
- To supervise the life, work and doctrinal viewpoints of all the other office-bearers in the church (1 Tim 3:1-7)
- To build up the congregation and the personal faith of the believers by means of house visitation. This is one of the most important aspects of the life of the church. The house visitation of the elder is linked with the sacrament of the Holy Communion. The Holy Communion obliges the believer to the re-evaluation of his faith and life. The elder should

¹³¹ Cf. Chapter 4, 4.5.2.2.2 where functions of elders in the New Testament government are discussed. Elders and ministers of the Word are the only offices to constitute church government.

assist him in this process. He should lead the believer back to Christ by way of instruction in the Word of God. The church council must organise the practice of house-visitation according to the circumstances in their particular congregation in such a way that all the above – mentioned principles are adhered to.

- To evangelise people to accept the Christian faith. Evangelisation is the basic task of the church (Matt 28:19-20). This is not only the duty of the minister of the Word, but of every believer. The task is especially emphasized in the exposition of the duty of the elder.
- To fulfil the duties described in article 16 with regard to the execution of church discipline and the maintenance of good order in the church. The principles and practical guidelines are found in the explanation of articles 71-81 (Vorster, 1999:44).

With these explanations given by Vorster, it shows that the government of the church rests largely on the office of elder. Theologically the RCZ administers church government through the office of the elder as is required in the Bible and also as formulated in the Church Order of Dort 1619. The RCZ should maintain the status quo concerning church government through the office of the elder.

The core business of the office of the elder is to encourage the growth of the church as listed in the explanation of Vorster above. The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:56) notes that elders are members of the Evangelism Committee at their preaching post by virtue of their office.

In the RCZ the office of the elder can be occupied by any person regardless of gender but one who has stayed in the congregation for more than one year and who is above 30 years of age (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:28) Though it is not stated explicitly in the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:29), elders are obliged to preach during the worship service because some of the congregations have more than two preaching posts. In the RCZ, elders and members of the Congregation are allowed to lead Sunday services because some congregations don't have any preaching posts (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:29). Because of this scenario, elders and deacons prepare their own sermons and preach during Sunday services when the minister of the Word is not present.

The office of elder is not viewed as a junior office to that of the minister of the Word, but these offices complement one another for the growth of God's Kingdom through the preaching of the Word, administration of sacraments and the administration of Church discipline.

The office of the elder shares in the governance of the church with the office of the minister of the Word. It is the duty of the church council to monitor and ensure that the office of the elder functions effectively for the growth of the Church of Christ. The functions of elders has been discussed a lot/ expansively in Chapter 4,

5.3.1.3 The Office of Deacon

The establishment of the office of deacon is not mentioned anywhere in the available sources consulted by the researcher; Van der Merwe (1981:79) and Rutoro (2007:93-94)¹³² only mention the minister of the Word and elders as members of the church council. The ministry of the deacon is indeed defined from the books of Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Cor. 12:28 and their ministry is indicated as a practical one. No church government is mentioned in the duties of the office of the deacons (Wilfong, 1992:115).

According to the Church Order of Dort (1619) article 25 states that:

The office peculiar to the Deacons is to diligently collect alms and other contributions of charity, and after mutual counsel, to distribute the same faithfully and diligently to the poor, both to residents and strangers, as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort those in distress, and to exercise care that the alms are nor misused; of which they render an account in the Consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the congregation, at such a time as the Consistory may see fit (RCSA Church Order, 2017:20).

This article does not mention that deacons are part of the church government but their duty is to collect and take care of all the offerings and contributions. The DRCM, ARC, and the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (1962:16; 1976:25; 1999:1; 2010:1; 2017:12) affirm that the set of Rules and Regulations has its origin from the Church Order of Dort (1619). Theologically the RCZ is the

¹³² Cf. Chapter 2, 2.4.1, this is the section where the establishment of the church council has been discussed. Only the minister of the Word and elders are mentioned as members of the church council.

one which deviated from the core business of the office of the deacon which is not in line with the Word of God and the teachings of the Reformed Churches concerning the issues of Church government.

Pali¹³³ (2016:206) holds that the duties of deacons in the New Testament are acknowledged and have been extended by the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa¹³⁴ to the distribution of the Holy Communion, comforting those in need and the marginalised, collecting offerings, and encouraging congregants to engage in social welfare in a diaconal way.

The Church Order of the Reformed Churches of South Africa article 25 stipulates that the office of the deacons shall do the following:

The office of the deacons is to ensure that the congregation actively practises its unity in Christ in mutual love. Their (the deacons') mission is to visit everyone in the community and according to Scripture, equip and actuate mutual love for everyone, especially to fellow believers; furthermore to assure that no one is estranged from the community of believers. The collections must be gathered carefully and distributed wisely within the comfort area of Scripture. The deacons must report their actions in the church council and, if necessary, report to the congregation according to the instruction of the church council (RCSA Church Order, 2017:20)

According to the Bible's teaching in the New Testament (1 Tim. 3:8-12), the RCZ must acknowledge that the office of the deacons is elected to handle the practical trepidations of the congregation, if not also that of the church. The practical concerns are such as taking care of the sick, the marginalised and those in need. The Acts of the National Synod of the RCSA at Potchefstroom (2009:607) concludes that the office of the deacons has the duty of fostering mutual assistance and fellowship in the church by initiating, coordinating and organising the ministry of fellowship and communal meals.

¹³³ Pali did his Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) in the Department of Practical Theology in the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State. His research topic is as follows: Leadership and transformation in the African Church: A practical theological study of one denomination.

¹³⁴ The Dutch Reformed Church of the Orange Free State belongs to the family of the Dutch Reformed churches in South Africa

In the New Testament the ministry of church government is the mandate of the minister of the Word and elders (1 Tim 5:17-18), deacons excluded. In the Reformed Church tradition, ministers of the Word and elders are members of the local congregation and they are answerable to that particular congregation, subject to its discipline (Zgambo 2018:89).

It is not the duty of the office of the deacons to participate in the teaching of sound doctrine, or the refuting of dissidents and taking decisions that are binding to the church.¹³⁵ Theologically the Church Order of the RCZ has deviated from the teachings of the Bible and the Reformed Church tradition. Zgambo (2018:93) argues that the point of departure for the office of deacons in the New Testament is that they were appointed to provide relief resources to the vulnerable, that is, the widows, the sick, the orphans, and the marginalised (Acts 6:1-6; Jas. 5:13-15).

According to Du Plooy (1982:107) through the office of the Word and under the guidance of the Spirit, God gathers His Church, and every place where churches have originated, people are elected to serve, ordained to certain offices to equip the members of the church as a way of building up their faith and preserving the unity of the faith.

Through church government, God reveals Himself through the Word as to how Christ governs His Church. He calls the office of the minister of the Word the one intended to teach, instruct and preach, the office of the elders to govern, and the office of the deacon to collect, take care and distribute the offerings. The RCZ should strive to realign the duties of the office-bearers by means of directing the issue of church government to the ministers of the Word and elders.

The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* created two more offices besides the three discussed. The two offices do not have voting power and their areas of operation is limited (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2010:41; 2017:31).

The offices do not operate in a vacuum but they operate within the church and they operate in the form of assemblies. This section will evaluate the operation of the assemblies in the RCZ, inter alia, regarding the teachings of the Bible and the Reformed Church government tradition.

¹³⁵ Cf. Chapter 2, 2.4.1.1 deacons in the RCZ do have voting rights in the church council. They participate in the exercising of church discipline.

5.3.1.4 Office of the Evangelist

The office of the evangelist is one of the offices which was adopted by the RCZ from the missionaries who started mission work from the DRC Cape Synod¹³⁶. The mission work in the RCZ was started by one mission with seven evangelists. The training of evangelists in the RCZ started way back in 1925 at Morgenster. According to Mandebvu (1976:11-12) the following were the first group to be trained as evangelists: Ezra Shumba from Chivi, Jeremiah Matanga from Gutu, Josiah Chipadza from Makumbe, and Shadrack Shumba from Chipinge. The evangelists' duties were to preach, evangelise, teach Catechism classes and organise pastoral care; they were, however, not allowed to participate in decision-making situations. Evangelists were allowed to preach¹³⁷ and do house visitations, says Rutoro (2007:95).

According to Rutoro (2007:98) the evangelists planted the church together with ministers during the years 1891-1952, where they were assisting ministers of the Word in teaching catechism, house visitation, and preaching. The training of evangelists was put on hold in 1953 and it was revived in 1994 because the church had reintroduced evangelism in Karoi under the Chinhoyi congregation (Synod Minutes, 1994:34). In 1999 Evangelist Stephen Hove was posted to Chinhoyi Congregation in Dete area in the Karoi District (Synod Minutes, 2000:3).

Because of the above development, the RCZ cooperated alongside the office of the evangelist in the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2010:41) with the following responsibilities:

- To preach the Word of God in the congregation
- To teach Catechism classes
- To do house visitation
- To bury the deceased and to do other duties in the congregation as delegated by the minister of the Word.

¹³⁶ Refer to Chapter 2. 2.3 Arrival of missionaries.

¹³⁷ Evangelists were allowed to prepare their own sermons and to preach among new believers.

- He would, however, be a member of the church with no voting rights.

The office of the evangelist in the RCZ is limited in terms of decision -making in all issues of church government. Evangelists are recruited on the basis of qualifications, so those with fewer than five passes at Ordinary level ZIMSEC¹³⁸ can apply to be trained for that office. This office is a stepping- stone on the way to the office of a minister of the Word. They (evangelists) are members of the presbytery but have no voting rights and they can be voted- in for the post of the youth coordinator only (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:14). Because of no participation in all issues of church government most if not all the evangelists, are presently occupied with upgrading themselves to be ministers of the Word. The Synodical committee of 22 February 2019 also made a resolution that all evangelists were to be encouraged to upgrade their qualifications to become ministers of the Word (Synodical Committee Minutes, 2019:2).

The church government system in the RCZ is not clear on this office because the evangelists are not allowed to vote and participate in some decision- makings issues whilst on the other hand they are allowed to participate in the church government of the Youth ministry; here they are allowed to take positions as youth coordinators at presbytery level which is a governing body of the RCZ at presbytery level.

The Reformed churches all support the Belgic Confession, the Church Order of Dort (1619), the RCSA Church Order and the DRC Church Order, yet they do not have any article which describes the office of the evangelist. The researcher is of the opinion that this was the temporary office which was instilled by the missionaries as a way of making a breakthrough with the gospel in a foreign land. This office is not at all part of the church government in the Reformed tradition, neither according to the principles of church government in the New Testament¹³⁹. In the RCZ the office of the evangelist is gender- inclusive, meaning that males or females can train

¹³⁸ The **Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC)** is an autonomous parastatal under the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture of the Republic of Zimbabwe, responsible for the administration of public examinations in Zimbabwean schools. Ordinary level in Zimbabwe is when a student has attained a Form 4 Examination certificate.

¹³⁹ Refer to the discussion made in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. There is no mention of the office of the evangelist in church government.

to work as an evangelist. However, there is another office in the RCZ which is only reserved for females whether married or unmarried: one has to be a full member of the RCZ to train as a Youth Counsellor.

5.3.1.5. Office of the Youth Counsellor

The office of Youth Counsellor in the RCZ has been in existence since the era of the missionaries yet there, nobody has bothered to do research and come up with the paper-proof of the office of the Youth Counsellor. The researcher has noted this because at a Synod assembly held at Morgenster Mission in September 1966 and various days after, (ACTA, 1966: 9)¹⁴⁰ the church adopted this post and decided that it would be responsible for their welfare. The Youth counsellors would be responsible for the girls' league and Sunday-school classes (Synod Minutes, 1966:4).

The office of the youth counsellor is described in the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* of 2010¹⁴¹ and 2017¹⁴². The duties of the youth counsellor are mentioned as follows:

- To preach the Word of God in the congregation.
- To lead the following groups; youth fellowship, catechumen classes, Sunday school, girls' league and women's league. In leading the women's league the youth counsellor will be under the leadership of the minister's wife or under the leadership of the minister of the Word himself if the congregation is under the leadership of a female minister of the Word.
- To do house visitation.
- To be a member of the church council/ presbytery/ synod but with no voting rights.
- To be under the supervision of the church council.

¹⁴⁰ ACTA 9 refers to the item number in the matter which was deliberated at the said Synod.

¹⁴¹ RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2010:41) article 21.

¹⁴² RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:31) article 20.

- To do other duties in the congregation as delegated by the minister of the Word and the church council.
- She may be voted to be the coordinator of the youth at the presbytery level in her respective presbytery (RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo, 2017:31).

This office of the youth counsellor is not mentioned anywhere in the Church Order of Dort, the Belgic Confession, the Church Order of the DRC or the Church Order of the RCSA of which the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe is part. The principles of church government in the New Testament church government do not mention the office of the youth counsellor. The office of the elders is the only one mentioned in the Bible participating in all issues pertaining to church government.

The office of the youth counsellor and evangelist has the form of ordination which is closely related to that of the office of the ministers of the Word. The difference is that they are ordained through taking an oath with no laying-on of hands on the head, as is done with the ministers of the Word (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:43). Furthermore the youth counsellors and evangelists are not called through the congregations as is the case with ministers of the Word but they are posted/appointed by the Synodical committee or its executive. They serve a contract of five years in a congregation from which they can be transferred afterwards to another place as the Synodical committee may see fit (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:46).

The office of the youth counsellor was instilled to assist the missionaries in doing missionary work, yet the researcher is of the opinion that the office was supposed to be temporary because all the duties mentioned in the office are repetitions of the duties of the minister of the Word and of the elder. More so, even, the office of the youth counsellor does not participate in the decision- makings of the church council, or presbytery or the synod: this makes it clear that this office, though recognised in the RCZ, is not part of the church government.

In conclusion, we have seen that the minister of the Word, the elder, the deacon, the evangelist and the youth counsellor are members of the church council in the RCZ. Theologically, the

minister of the Word and the office of the elder are only officers who participate fully in the system of church government according to the teachings of the New Testament and the Reformed church Orders since the inception of the Church Order of Dort (1619).

Resulting from the above discussion, it follows that the RCZ should adhere to the teachings of the New Testament and of other Reformed family churches on all issues dealing with church government; this, especially if it wants to maintain the identity of the Reformed government having claimed to follow the reformed system of church government. With all these offices in the RCZ, we shall see in the next section how these offices fit in the ecclesiastical assemblies, such as the church council, presbytery and the synod of the RCZ.

5.4 Church Assemblies

The research study is a theological evaluation of the government system in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The RCZ is structured in three assemblies, namely the church council, the presbytery and the synod as the highest¹⁴³ major assembly (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:14-15). The Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (Cape Synod) article 18 mentions that there are four assemblies: church council, presbytery, synod and General Synod (DRC Church Order, 2011:4) The aim of this study is to evaluate whether these assemblies are still functioning as is being taught in the Bible and the teachings of the *Church Order* of Dort (1619).

According to the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA)'s Church Order article 30, church assemblies will deal only with ecclesiastical matters and then that in an ecclesiastical manner. Major assemblies will deal only with matters that could not be finalized in minor assemblies or that concern all churches in question collectively (RCSA Church Order, 2017:24).

Because of this the Reformed church government should move from the bottom to the top, not from top to bottom. This creates a hierarchical tendency in the governance of the Church which is not the norm in the Reformed system of church government.

¹⁴³ The Synod of the RCZ is the Supreme body of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

We shall evaluate the development which has taken place in all these three church government assemblies in the RCZ since the formation of these assemblies in ¹⁴⁴ 1905 to date. The discussion of the study will be guided by the following question: Are the three assemblies which are used for church government in the RCZ, still relevant to the teachings of the Bible and the Reformed tradition as contained in the DRC Church Order and the *Church Order* of Dort (1619)? The researcher is interested in consulting the DRC Church Order because the DRC Cape Synod is the Church which sent the missionaries to plant the DRCM -- now referred to as the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe¹⁴⁵ (Van der Merwe, 1981:62). By answering this question at the end of this research study we shall be in a position to clearly state that theologically the church government system in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe is indeed the reformed type of church government. Answering the above question will also help us to identify in what the church authority is vested: is the authority of the RCZ government system vested in the church council, presbytery or the synod?

5.4.1 Church Council/Consistory

As already mentioned in chapter 2¹⁴⁶, the establishment of the council of congregations (Van der Merwe, 1981:79) took twenty-six years. According to Monsma and Van Dellen (1964:5) the word “consistory” is derived from a Latin word *consistorium* meaning a place of meeting. In this sense a consistory is a ruling body of a congregation made up of ordained ministers as well as elders and deacons referred to by Janssen (2000:53). The church council is defined in article 30 of the Belgic Confession -- also known as the Netherlands confession, as follows:

We believe that this true Church must be governed by that spiritual policy which our Lord hath taught us in His Word; namely, that there must be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God, and to administer the sacraments; also elders and deacons, who, with the pastors, form the

¹⁴⁴ The formation of the Mission council, church council, and presbytery was necessitated by the expansion of the missionary work which was started by A. A. Louw together with the seven evangelists as discussed in chapter 2

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Chapter 2, 2.3. Which discusses the arrival of missionaries from DRC (Cape Synod) in South Africa to do missionary work, in Southern Rhodesia now called Zimbabwe.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Chapter 2, 2.4.1 discusses the formation of the church council. This will help us to evaluate church government of that time with, inter alia, the church of this present time.

council of the Church...(Cf. Zeze, 2012:188). Considering all the explanations given above concerning the meaning of the consistory or the church council, we can say that it is the government body of the local congregation.

Every congregation has a church council, which has been entrusted with the supervision, government and discipline of the congregation.

The ARC¹⁴⁷ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (1967:1)¹⁴⁸ states that every congregation has a church council which oversees the day- to- day running of the congregation. The same edition of the 1967 article 18 notes that the minister of the Word, elders and deacons are members of the Church council; however, the latter must be less than the elders (ARC *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 1967:3). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the history of the RCZ is silent on the formation of the office of the deacons, so it is difficult for us to trace back and find out when and where the office of the deacon was instituted and incorporated into the church government system.

Van der Merwe (1981:79) writes about the establishment of the church council and comes up with the followings regulations of the church council:

- It should consist of the local missionary and one or more elders (according to the need of the congregation).
- The elders will be elected by male members of the congregation.
- The task of the church council should be similar to that of the church council in the mother church but adapted to local conditions.
- The church council should meet quarterly or as often as necessary.

¹⁴⁷ ARC is the acronym of the African Reformed Church. The Dutch Reformed Church Mission was renamed the African Reformed Church after the Church attained its autonomy from the mother church of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Cape Synod. However, the acronym ARC was changed again when the country obtained its Independence, when it was thus re-named the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe

¹⁴⁸ The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* was revised a number of times, viz.in 1967, 1976, 1986, 1996, 1999, 2010 and the new edition which is in use was published in 2017.

The reason for the establishment of the church council was that it should act as the governing body of the local congregation. This establishment of the church council with the minister of the Word and elders only, without the deacons, was in line with the teachings of the Reformed Churches' system of church government.

Originally, the Church Order of Dort (1619) article 37, reads (in the first part):

In all Churches there will be a Consistory composed of the Ministers of the Word and Elders, who will meet at least once a week. The Church Order of the RCSA (2017:28) expresses the same sentiment in article 37, which reads:

In all churches there will be a church council composed of minister(s) of the Word and the elders. The church council will meet regularly under the chairmanship of the minister, or the ministers alternately if there is more than one (RCSA Church Order, 2017:28.

In the Reformed Church government considering the articles of the Church Order of Dort (1619), the Church Order of the RCSA (2017:28) notes/declares the same things concerning the composition of the church council. However, article 26 of the Church Order (2011:5) of the DRC Cape Synod from which the RCZ originated, reads:

Every congregation has a church council, entrusted with the supervision, government and discipline of the congregation. The church council consists of ministers of the Word as well as elders and deacons¹⁴⁹.

The RCZ as a Church may have misinterpreted this article of the DRC, as a result of which it included the office of deacons in the issue of church government. The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (1967-2017) clearly states that the ministers of the Word, elders and deacons have the power to make deliberations, vote and exercise church discipline. The Church Order of the RCSA (2017:28) article 38, says:

¹⁴⁹The decentralised church council consists of minister(s) of the Word, elders and deacons, appointed by the church council. Under the term "decentralised church council", any grouping in the congregation is understood.

When a church council is instituted for the first time, or reinstated, it must be done with the advice of the classis. If there are only a small number of elders, the deacons may be considered to form part of the church council by way of local arrangement; this will apply only in cases where there are fewer than three elders.

According to the Church Order of Dort (1619), the Church Order of the RCSA, and the Church Order of the DRC, deacons can only be members who deliberate on issues of church government by invitation of the church council. The position of the RCSA is that the church council and the deacons are two different groups, which is why Article 4 in the Church Order of the RCSA reads as follows:

The lawful calling and admission of a person who has not previously served in the office of the Word, and who has been examined preparatively (preparatoir) by the classis in which he resides, shall comprise the following: first, after prayers have been said, the election by the church council and deacons according to the customary local procedures or as determined by the church council will occur; and in the churches with only one minister, with the advice of the classis or the counsellor appointed by the classis for this purpose.... (RCSA Church Order, 2017:4).

The theological argument here, is that the deacons are not permanent members of the church council who exercise church government together with the ministers of the Word and elders because the reformed church government perspective, as explained in the above article of the RCSA, belongs to the church council. The DRC of the Cape Synod used the word “decentralised”¹⁵⁰ in order for them to include deacons in their system of church government.

All these church orders consulted, have their original form from the Church Order of Dort (1619), so, therefore it is good for us to refer to it every time on issues concerning the composition of the church council.

5.4.1.1 Duties of the Church council

The church council determines the area of responsibilities of the minister of the Word and the elders in regulating their duties. The minister of the Word is focused on the ministry of the Word in all its forms, and the office of the elder centres on spiritual discernment, care, guidance,

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Article 26 of the DRC Cape Synod footnote.

management and supervision (DRC Church Order, 2011:3-4). This can be illustrated by the table below;

Table 5-1 Duties of the church council

Duties of the Minister of the Word	Duties of the Elder
1. Leading worship services	1. The preparing of members for the ministry
2. Edifying the congregation	2. The control of the congregation
3. Teaching and training of believers	3.Home visitation
4. Ministering the congregation in the world	4. Exercising supervision and discipline
5. Leading and organising the congregation	5.Guarding over the purity of the doctrine
6. Exercising Christian love and discipline	6.Being co-responsible for catechism
7. Supervising pastoral care	7. The vocation to lead others to Christ
8. The minister of the Word is the chairperson of the church council	8. Leading the worship service where consent has been given by the church council and the presbytery
9. Leading and guiding the church council from the Bible and Reformed creeds in church governance.	9. Other charges determined by the church council

The Church Order of the DRC Cape (2011:4) claims that the office or ministry of the deacon centres on a ministry of practical service, which starts in the worship service and from there extends to the congregation and the world in which the members live. The church council also determines the area of responsibility of the ministry of the deacons. The duties of the office of the deacons are illustrated in the table below to show that they are not meant for the government of the church.

Table 5-2 Duties of the Deacons

	Duties of the Deacons
1.	The equipping of members for their ministry
2.	To visit, comfort, and support of all who are in need of care in some way or another
3.	The gathering and spending of the means required for diaconal work
4.	The organisation and administration of the ministry of care of the congregation
5.	Other charges as directed by the church council.

All three offices, the office of the minister of the Word, the office of the elder, and the office of the deacon complement each other for the edification and the growth of the body of Christ. On looking at the two tables above, where the office of the minister of the Word and that of the elder mentions the leading of the worship service, government, pastoral care (visitation), exercising supervision and discipline, it is significant that all these responsibilities are not mentioned in the duties of the deacon at all.

However, this study indicates that the RCZ's system of church government is made up of ministers of the Word, elders and deacons. This is so because article 15 of the RCZ (*Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:30) says those who can make binding resolutions in the church council are ministers of the Word, elders and deacons (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:30)). The researcher is trying to argue that the church government of the RCZ theologically, should be an original of what is contained in the Bible, the Church Order of the Synod of the Dort (1619) and other Reformed Churches worldwide. The system of church government should maintain the reformed church government perspective, so that church government issues remain the

responsibility of the ministers of the Word and elders while the issues relating to the diaconal remain the responsibility of the office of the deacons.

The Reformed church government system must be maintained at all costs. According to the Church Order of the RCSA (2017:60) article 82:

The church council /will provide those who move out of the boundaries of that church, with a document of attestation concerning their confession and conduct which will be signed by two of its members.

In the RCZ perspective it is the duty of the elders to write testimonial letters on the members of their sections or preaching posts in case they visit another place outside the boundary of the said congregation. If a person is transferring from one congregation to another, the minister of the Word is the one who is responsible for writing the disjunction¹⁵¹ letter (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:48). Only the elders are authorised by the church to write visiting letters or certificates¹⁵² of visitation for church members; the minister of the Word is the only person in the church allowed to write and issue transferring or disjunction letters to members of the congregation. The latter must also do the writing of disjunction letters or certificates after consultation with the elder of the said section or preaching- post from which a member comes.

On this note the RCZ's system of church government is in line with the principles of the Bible and the Reformed teachings. In the New Testament, apostle Paul, as a leader of his time wrote attestation letters of commendation to leaders of certain churches (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim.1:3 and Tit.1:5).

Ministers of the Word and the elders, are, in the view of the Reformed church government, regarded as the highest assembly of authority in the local congregation. In this regard all the matters which the church council cannot deal with, will be referred to the major assemblies

¹⁵¹ A Disjunction letter is a letter or certificate of transfer given to a church member who is transferring from one congregation to another, or a person transferring from the RCZ to another denomination.

¹⁵² Visiting letters or certificates refer to a letter given to a person who is moving out of the jurisdiction of his or her congregation for a certain period but it should not be more than six months

where the latter will deal only with matters that could not be finalised in the minor¹⁵³ assemblies (RCSA Church Order, 2017:24). Article 30 of the aforesaid Church order says:

Church assemblies will deal only with ecclesiastical matters and will do so in an ecclesiastical manner. Major assemblies will only deal with matters that could not be completed in minor assemblies or that concern all the churches in question collectively (RCSA Church Order, 2017:24).

In church government, there are matters which can be discussed and have binding resolutions made if they do not affect other congregations of the same denomination in any way. However, on the other hand some of the matters cannot be finalized by the church council, or presbytery because the resolution may have a bearing on the whole church or denomination. The reformed system of church government if practised in the right manner, will use the bottom- to- the- top¹⁵⁴ type of government. In this regard ,matters will be deliberated by the church council first, then by the presbytery followed by the synod and finally, referred to the General Synod.

The RCZ does not have a general synod so, it follows that all matters are finalised at the Synod (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* 2017:14). The Reformed Church government makes a clear indication that the church council does not operate in isolation but it operates in concurrence with the presbytery.

5.4.2 Presbytery

As we have mentioned in chapter 2¹⁵⁵ the Presbytery started to function in 1918 and it had legislative powers and the supervisory task of the synod and the presbytery. This was so because all the congregations formed one presbytery so there was no synod. Because of this scenario, the Presbytery reported to the Mission Council and the Mission Board. Zeze (2012:193 explains that the word “presbytery” and “classis” are one and the same terms and generally denote a gathering of a minister in-charge plus one elder from each established congregation. According to the RCZ

¹⁵³ Minor assemblies can refer to the church council in case of the presbytery, or can also refer to the presbytery in case of the Synod.

¹⁵⁴ RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:14)

¹⁵⁵ Chapter2, 2.4.2 under the subheading “Presbytery”

Bhuku yoMurairo, 2010:6; 2017:14)¹⁵⁶, the composition of the presbytery is made up of all serving ministers who belong to the congregations of the respective presbyteries of the RCZ. There will be also one delegated elder or deacon/deaconess or former¹⁵⁷ elder or deacon/deaconess from each of the congregations belonging to the respective presbyteries.

The earliest editions of the African Reformed Church, now the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, all say different things concerning the composition of the presbyteries. According to the ARC (*Bhuku yoMurairo*, 1967:18; 1976:26 and 1999:10) it mentions that presbyteries are constituted as follows:

1. All the serving ministers who belong to the congregations of the respective presbyteries of the African Reformed Church.
2. One delegated elder or the former elder from each of the congregations belonging to the respective Presbyteries.
3. Presbyteries assemble under the chairmanship of a minister of the Word who is a member of the Presbytery.

The discussion now centres around two things from the Church Order of the RCZ, viz. that both the earliest and the latest edition had the deviations on the system of church government in a reformed perspective. The first issue where the church deviated from the system of church government, was that of delegating former elders who had retired to represent the congregation. The ARC *Bhuku yoMurairo* (1967:18) supports the *Church Order* of Dort (1619) that congregations at presbytery level should be represented by the ministers of the Word and delegated elders from each congregation.

According to the *Church Order* of Dort (1619) article 41 states the following:

¹⁵⁶ Refer also to Chapter 2, 2.4.2.1 where the constitution or composition of the presbytery in the RCZ was discussed.

¹⁵⁷ This another area where the RCZ has deviated from the teachings of the Bible and the principles of the Reformed system of church government.

The Classical meetings¹⁵⁸ shall consist of neighbouring churches that respectively delegate, with proper credentials, a Minister and an Elder, to meet at such a time and place as was determined by the previous Classical meeting, with the understanding that this be within the next three months. At these meetings the Ministers shall preside in rotation or the assembly shall choose one to preside; however, the same Minister shall not be chosen twice in succession. Furthermore the president shall, among other things, ask each of them if Consistory meetings are held in their churches; if church discipline is exercised; if the poor and the schools are cared for; lastly, if they need judgement and help from the Classis for the proper government of their Church. The Minister, designated by the previous Classis, shall preach a brief sermon from the Word of God, which the others shall judge and point out if anything is lacking in it. Finally, at the last meeting before the Particular Synod, delegates shall be chosen to attend the said Synod (RCSA Church Order, 2017:30).

Article 41 of the Church Order of the RCSA (2017:30) mentions the same message as in the article of the Church Order of Dort. This shows that the Church Order of the RCSA is a replica of the Church Order of Dort (1619). Therefore the RCZ should emulate what has been done by other Reformed Churches in maintaining the essence of the Reformed system of church government, viz. that the government of the church is for the elders.

The second thing to take note of in the government system in the RCZ is that of the deacon/deaconess being delegated to be members of the presbytery where church government issues or matters are discussed. Matters of church government shall be the responsibilities of elders not deacons (*Church Order of the RCSA, 2017:30*)¹⁵⁹. Again in brief, the RCZ does not delegate two elders to presbytery in the event that the congregation does not have the minister of the Word as has been the case in other Reformed Churches (*RCSA Church Order, 2017:30*).

The presbytery is a church governing body, so therefore only ministers of the Word and elders shall be the officers who should participate in the deliberations of the presbytery. The RCZ as Church is obliged to rethink again why the latest editions of the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* include the office of the deacons as delegates to the presbytery assemblies. More so, equal representation is another matter of concern because congregations without ministers are deprived of the right of equal representation in all church government deliberations.

¹⁵⁸ In RCZ Classical meetings refer to Presbyteries meetings.

¹⁵⁹ Refer to article 41 of the Church Order of the RCSA.

5.4.2.1. Duties of the Presbytery

The presbytery in the RCZ is regarded as one of the governing bodies which supervises congregations of the respective presbyteries. As at present the RCZ has nineteen presbyteries (Synod Minutes, 2018:19). The presbytery in the RCZ was established in 1918 and its main purpose was to discuss matters such as pastoral work in the church, report on the work in the congregations, on church discipline and other issues pertaining to the life of the church (Mutumburanzou, 1999:52).

According to the RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo (2017:33), the presbytery is mandated by the church to do the following things:

- To supervise all congregations within the respective presbyteries, that church councils are being held/constituted according to the constitution of the RCZ.
- To see if church councils are exercising church discipline, supervision and are disciplining elders and deacons.
- To ensure that supervision and suspension of ministers of the Word be enforced and that the latter shall be disciplined by the Synodical committee or the Synod at its session.
- To safe guard the doctrines of the church and to attend to all matters presented to its meeting in the first instance or by way of appeal.
- To form new congregations and to dissolve congregations in consultation with the Synod.
- To pair off alternate congregations.
- To supervise the fulfilment of congregational budgets.
- To elect church councils for new congregations.
- To see to the induction and disjunction of ministers of the Word in the Presbytery.

- To ordain candidate ministers of the Word although this is done in consultation with the Actuary of the Church.
- To take good care of the poor.
- To advise and assist congregations in any matters regarding proper governance of the congregation.

The presbyteries in the RCZ have the duty to visit congregations in their respective presbyteries as a way of reviving and encouraging them to live according to the expectation of the Church in terms of the worshipping, giving and supporting of ministers of the Word (*ARC Bhuku yoMurairo*, 1976:10). The RCZ presbyteries assemble at a place determined by the Committee, referred to as the Presbytery Executive (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:14).

As mentioned earlier the RCZ was founded by the DRC Cape Synod, for which the Church Order of the DRC (2011:6) listed the activities of the presbyteries as follows:

- Church visitation
- The supervision of the congregations, to see to it that church council and congregations fulfil their vocations.
- To advise the church councils.
- To see to the establishment of new congregations or dissolution of congregations at the request of the church councils as well as the determination of congregation boundaries.
- To attend to matters which are presented to the presbytery meeting either in the first instance or by way of appeal.
- To manage the communal calling and joint work of the congregations in the presbyter as determined by the presbytery from time to time.

- To see to the suspension and discipline of all elders and ministers of the Word, which included that of the retired ministers of the Word and ministry candidates, without excluding the supervision of the church council over its office-bearers.
- To oversee the appointment of substitute ministers of the Word.
- To grant limited competence on the request of the church councils.

The duties of the RCZ presbyteries are a replica of the duties of the DRC Cape Synod because the RCZ is the brainchild of the former (Cape Synod). In this sense, the issue of delegating deacons to the presbytery might be a copy of the RCZ from the DRC because they practise the same thing. The difference is that article 30 of the Church Order of the DRC is silent on the issue of the former elder mentioned in the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*¹⁶⁰ (*Church Order of the DRC*, 2011:5-6).

5.4.2.2. Presbytery Executive

Chairperson (Ordained Minister)

Vice Chairperson (Ordained Minister)

Secretary (elder)

Vice Secretary (elder)

Treasurer (Elder)

Actuary/Acturias (Ordained Minister)

Youth Coordinator (Spiritual Worker¹⁶¹) (RCZ Synod Minutes, 2012:9/98).

¹⁶⁰ Cf. 5.4.2 Presbytery.

¹⁶¹ Spiritual worker can refer to minister of the Word, evangelist, and youth counsellor. All these can be voted into the post of the youth coordinator. The Youth coordinator is the person who is in charge of the youth ministry in the church but this office is at presbytery level. At this synod it was resolved that

The signatories of the Presbytery bank accounts shall be the chairperson, the secretary and the treasurer. The committee shall be elected after every two years (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:14).

The RCZ's church government system is not in agreement with the Church Order of Dort (1619) because the Church Order of Dort does not mention offices at the Classis. Article 41 mentions that the ministers of the Word should preside at the meetings in rotation. This will leave all ministers of the Word on the same level. This article of the church order of Dort promotes the equality of the office-bearers. The issue of the Executive in the RCZ, if not managed well, will end up creating hierarchical structures in the Church. Contrary to this, researcher noted in the Church Order of the DRC does not mention the issue of the Presbytery Executive in the articles which deals with issues of the Presbytery, Articles 29-31 (DRC Church Order, 2011:5-6).

The Church Order of Dordt and Church Order of the RCSA (2017:30) article 41 oppose the issue of the Executive of the Presbytery by stating that, the various ministers shall preside over the classis in rotation, or one shall be chosen by the meeting; however, the same minister shall not be chosen twice in succession.

The RCZ has decided to have an office at the presbytery which one cannot deny but the challenge remains that sometimes, due to these offices at the Presbyteries, one minister can be elected more than once in succession. A minister of the Word can be in the exercise committee as long as he is in the specific presbytery. The researcher is referring to this scenario because some of the presbyteries have as few as three congregations only (Cf. Synodical committee Minutes, 22/02/2019). At this meeting, three congregations, namely Mutare, Rusape and Dangamvura were delimited from Pamushana¹⁶² presbytery to form the Mutare presbytery. The presbytery only has three (3) ministers of the Word and in the Presbytery executive the posts for the chairperson, vice chairperson, Actuary/Acturias and the youth coordinator, are to be

evangelists and youth counsellors could be elected to the post of youth coordinators in their respective presbyteries.

¹⁶² These congregations were allowed by the synodical committee to have their own presbytery because of the distance. Pamushana presbytery is in Masvingo province whilst those congregations in the new presbytery are in Manicaland province. The distance from the one province to the other is approximately 300 kilometres.

occupied by the ministers of the Word. With this background one of the ministers of the Word shall take two posts at a given time. The issue of rotation as mentioned in the Church Order of the RCSA (2017:30) article 41 shall be invalid. The deviation which was made by the RCZ from the Church Order of Dort (1619) is actually creating hierarchical positions in the governing of the church. We do not deny that there is a need for reformation in the contemporary church but if we reform the system of church government we tend to lose or move away from what is expected to be the identity of the Reformed system of church government. True reformation should be a turning- back to the Reformed system. Reforming the system of church government should be measured in line with the teachings of Bible on the issue of church government.

In the RCZ, the presbytery is considered to be a higher court to the church, yet on the other hand, a lower court to the synod. This implies that the assemblies of the RCZ are well-ordered in a hierarchical way. It is claimed that the ministers of the Word in the RCZ belong to the synod because the presbyteries are only allowed to suspend and discipline Evangelists, Youth counsellors, elders and deacons in case they have erred and they (ministers of the Word) can only be disciplined or dismissed by the Synodical Committee or the Synod¹⁶³.

5.4.3. Synod

The RCZ Synod is the highest decision- making body of the church; it is the final council, assembly or court of appeal and its decisions are binding¹⁶⁴. Article 38 of the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:38) says the Synod of the RCZ has the powers to revise the rules and regulations of the RCZ by means of reforming them, by repealing or rejecting the proposal from the minor assemblies such as that of the presbyteries and different church committees.

This study shall analyse and evaluate the authority of the RCZ with respect to other assemblies in matters concerning church government. The composition of the duties and authority of the RCZ Synod will also be evaluated. By doing this, the researcher will try to find more courteous/tactful words to use than the use of “highest decision- making body” and “powers”. In

¹⁶³ Refer to the duties of the presbytery as discussed in this chapter, section 5.4.2.1.

¹⁶⁴ Article 38 of the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:34).

conclusion of this section the Synod Executive shall discuss inter alia the Church Order of Dort and the teachings of the Bible.

According to Janssen (2006:210), the synod is the meeting of ministers of the Word and elders who have been delegated by each presbytery within their particular group of presbyteries. The Church Order of the DRC (2011:6) article 32, states that the synod assembly is composed of delegates of congregations which form a geographical unit that can meet easily. The grouping may be changed by the general synod/the Moderamen¹⁶⁵ of the General Synod if requested by the relevant synod(s)/synod committee(s).

The Church Order of the RCSA (2017:36) article 47, mentions the regional synod as an assembly of neighbouring classes, to which each classis delegates an equal number of ministers of the Word and elders, as determined by the regional synod. The regional synod shall meet annually, unless, in the opinion of at least two classes, it has become essential to call an extraordinary regional synod. It is clear that the Reformed Churches in South Africa have a regional and general synod which is not the case in the RCZ. The Church Order of Dort (1619) is the primary source of the Church Order of the RCSA, because article 47¹⁶⁶ says that every year, or if needs be, more often, four or five or more neighbouring Classes shall meet as a Particular Synod, to which each Classis shall delegate two ministers and two Elders. At the close of both, the Particular and the General Synod, it shall be authorized to determine, with the counsel of the Classis, the period and place of the next Synod (RCSA Church Order, 2017:36). Considering the RCSA Church Order (2017:36) the composition of the regional and particular synod mentioned above, has given us an indication that congregations are represented indirectly at the synod. One can conclude that the attachment of the synod to a local congregation ,has been . What is the position of the RCZ on the composition of the Synod assembly?

¹⁶⁵ In the case of the RCZ the Moderamen or Moderature (to be inclusive) is the executive of the synod because there is a General Synod. All congregations in the country will assemble to form the synod.

¹⁶⁶ Article 47 of the Church Order of Dort.

5.4.3.1. Composition of the RCZ Synod

In section 10, of the constitution of the RCZ¹⁶⁷, it is agreed that the RCZ Synod is the Supreme¹⁶⁸ body of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The RCZ Synod is constituted by all serving ministers of the congregations which belong to the RCZ, accompanied by one delegated elder or deacon/deaconess from every established congregation. All ministers engaged in other official church posts shall not have a right to vote, but can/may be voted for. Two representatives from the respective leagues¹⁶⁹ will have no voting rights (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:14-15). Leagues shall be present in order for them to present reports from their groups.

The Synod shall meet every two years unless in the opinion of the Synodical committee, it has become essential to call an extraordinary meeting. When the Synod is not in session its duties are carried out by the Synodical committee. All delegates at the Synod shall present their credentials to prove that they have been delegated by their respective church councils (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:35).

The task of the Synod of the RCZ includes the adoption of the Church Order, adoption of reports from different committees and church leagues. The Synod shall approve the liturgical forms. The RCZ synod is a church government assembly which suspends and exercises church discipline upon members who violate the rules and regulations of the RCZ (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:35). The Church Order and its supplements (2011:43) declares that the Synod shall approve the liturgical forms, the Psalter Hymnal, and the Bible versions for suitable use in worship. The Synod of the RCZ is found wanting on the issue of the translation of the Hymns, liturgical forms and the Bibles in different languages. The issue of translation of all church literature in different languages is discussed at every synod assembly.

¹⁶⁷ The constitution of the RCZ (*Bhuku yoMurairo*) is also referred to as the Rules and Regulations, combines both the Church Order and the Administration of all church departments such as hospitals, schools, colleges, business units such as bookshops, farms and butcheries.

¹⁶⁸ The word “*Supreme*” can be replaced by the following synonyms, Highest, Best, Ultimate, Superlative, Utmost, Absolute, Extreme and Top. We should keep in mind that Christ is the Head of the church, if we take a closer look at these words, they point out the issue of hierarchy.

¹⁶⁹ Leagues report their activities to the church council and synod when they are in session. They are also supervised by the church council.

The issue of the composition of the delegates from congregations in the RCZ is open to elders and deacons, which is not appropriate according to the teachings of the Bible and the Reformed perspective on church government. The synod is mandated to amend the regulations of the Church which is part of Church government.

According to the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:35) the Synod is mandated for the handling of matters which are presented to it either in the first instance or by way of appeal. If the congregation has delegated a deacon, it means that the deacon will participate fully in the matters of church government. All matters to be deliberated at the Synod shall in the first instance, be heard at presbytery except those from different church committees such as finance, evangelism, business units and other committees (*Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:35).

The synod of the RCZ is made up of representatives from all congregations who have been delegated to attend the assembly. This assembly shall be presided over by the moderator who acts as a presiding officer. Zeze (2012:200) mentions that according to the Presbyterian tradition the moderator is not the 'Head of the Church', but he is the presiding officer of the meeting only. This brings us back to the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the Church Order of the RCSA (2017:30) where it states that various ministers of the Word shall preside over the meetings in rotation.

Janssen (2000:217-220) declares four things the moderator should do at a meeting; the moderator, like any other chairperson at the presbytery or church council meeting, is expected to:

1. Call and chair the Moderamen, synodical committee and synod meetings.
2. State the agenda of the meeting
3. Direct the flow of the meeting and guard against the domination of the meeting by one delegate.
4. Prepare a report on the state of the church and present it to the relevant meetings.

When the synod is not in session in the RCZ its business shall be conducted by the Synodical committee which will consist of the members of the Moderamen/Moderature which is the Synod Executive (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:15). This practice of the RCZ is a deviation

from the principles of church government as is explained in the Bible and the Reformed teachings.

5.4.3.2 Composition of the Synodical Committee

The Synodical Committee is made up of the following office-bearers mentioned below who must transact the business of the Synod when it is not in session.

Moderator	(Minister)
Vice Moderator	(Minister)
Synod secretary	(Elder)
Vice Synod Secretary	(Elder)
Actuary	(Minister)
General Secretary	(Ex officio) Minister
Vice- General Secretary	(Ex officio) Minister
Treasurer or Assistant treasurer (Ex officio).	

Each Presbytery is represented by one elder and one minister of the Word or the alternates. The Synodical committee convenes once a term which translates to three times per year (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo, 2017:22*).

5.4.3.3. Duties of the Synodical Committee

The Synodical committee shall adopt reports from various committees to be reported at the Synod assembly. It also implements all the resolutions adopted during the Synod assembly.

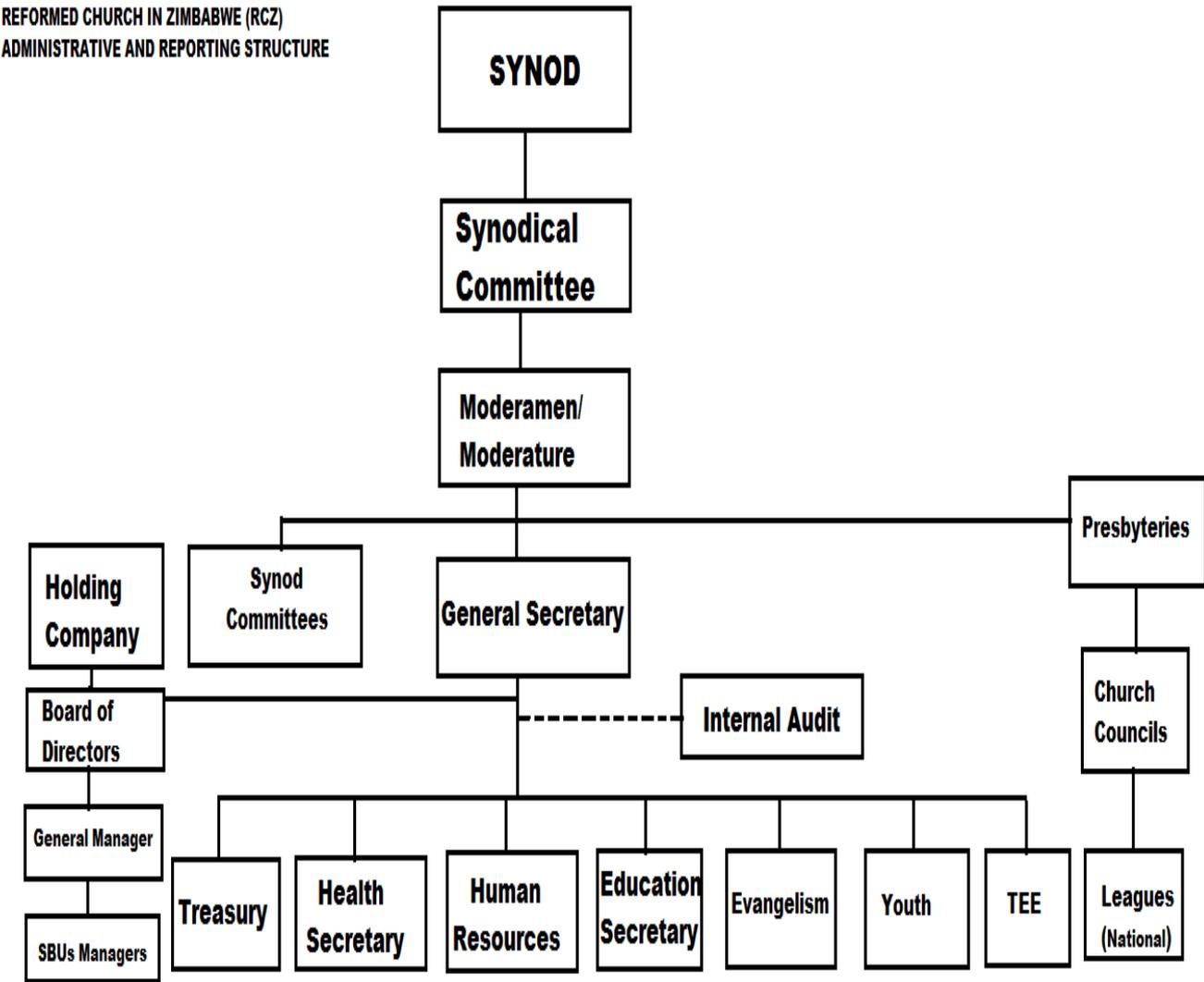
The Synodical committee is a church government body with limited powers because it supervises the presbytery, and revises policies which are aligned to the budget of the church but it is not allowed by the Synod to adopt or repeal any issues which have to do with the Church Order, Creeds and doctrines of the Church (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo 2017:35*).

The duties of the RCZ Synodical Committee in other Reformed Churches like the RCSA are to act like a regional synod which is an assembly of neighbouring classes, to which, each classis delegates an equal no. of ministers of the Word and elders as determined by the regional synod

(RCSA Church Order, 2017:36). The difference is that in the RCZ the representation comes from the presbytery, not the regional synod.

The appointment of committee members for the church committee is another responsibility of the Synodical committee. The challenge with these committees is that some of them might be making recommendations which can undermine the authority of the elders and ministers of the Word because they report directly to the Synodical committee and the Synod. The system of church government in the church is not limited or confined to the office of the elders only but some of the duties of the elders are transferred to committees. The system of church government is illustrated by the organogram below.

Figure 5-3 Church government structure of the RCZ¹⁷⁰



The church government structure in the above organogram creates hierarchical powers in major assemblies (RCZ Strategic Plan, 2019:25). Plaatjies Van Huffel (2014:39) records that reformed church government is based on the interdependence of the governing bodies. The church councils are permanent bodies while the presbyteries and synods are temporary. The church

¹⁷⁰ Retrieved from the RCZ Strategic Plan for 2019-2024 (2019:25).

council is composed of the ministers of the Word and elders. She maintains that the authority of the church council is original (2014:39).

The reference to the Supreme body in the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:14) is not right because it points to the issue of hierarchy among officers of the Church. The term ‘major’ or ‘broader’ does not designate a higher rank. *Plaatjies van Huffel* (2014:39) thinks that the terms “major” or “broader” rather indicates that in an assembly, more churches are represented than at the local church council.

The church is not a democracy, where everything is decided by popular voice. The RCZ maintains that the teachings of the Reformed system of church government regarding permanent offices must be maintained in the local church councils. Those offices in the presbytery and the synod shall remain in force if the said assembly is in session.

It is not the duty of the Synod, the Synodical Committee through the Moderamen and the presbytery to see how the congregation assembles for worship services. The council is responsible to regulate worship services, to see to it that the principles of all things approved by the Synod adhere to the Church Order and its Supplements, (2011:51). The RCZ’s system of church government, directed by the Synod Executive, also refers to the Moderature¹⁷¹ where the duty of the executive is to implement all resolutions of the Synod on behalf of the Synodical Committee (*RCZ Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:35).

Article 84 of the Church Order of the RCSA (2017:60) declares that no church, minister of the Word, elder or deacon shall in any way dominate other churches, ministers, elders or deacons respectively.

The church government, according to *Plaatjies van Huffel* (2014:37) is that each local congregation is autonomous with the right of self-governance, but is restricted in that the local churches cannot stand on their own, but must unite on the basis of their confession. Failure to maintain the principle of limited autonomy of the local congregation leads to hierarchy, says *Plaatjies van Huffel* (2014:37).

¹⁷¹ Cf. Chapter 2 where the legislative power of the Synod has been discussed.

The system of church government should guard against the exchange of Christ as the Head of the Church with the leadership of the church, as in this case, the RCZ might end up transferring the Headship of the church to the Synod Executive. The authority that Christ, as the head of the Church, gives to his church, resides in the church council. The church councils are the visible representative government of God's kingdom and have general oversight over the local congregation in the preaching of the Word, in the administration of the sacraments, and in the exercise of the Christian discipline (Plaatjies van Huffel, 2014:37). Therefore the Church and the kingdom should not be separated but clearly distinguished. Reformed church government perspective resides in the church council which is original and permanent, unlike the presbytery and synod assemblies which are temporary. In chapter 4 of this study, the Bible shows that there was a good relationship between the elders and the congregation. The New Testament congregation is governed by its own congregation's elders. The elders, according to the express instruction of the New Testament, have the authority to shepherd the congregation (Strauch, 1995:293). The elders are the officers mandated in the New Testament to govern the church, not the Synod executive.

5.4.3.4 Synod Executive

The Synod executive on the one hand does not have executive powers but on the other hand it does: in the church government system of the RCZ there are certain duties which belong to the members of the Synod Executive. This is contrary to what Zeze (2012:199) says that they are not policy-makers but the implementers of the decisions of the Synod. In this sense one can ask if there is equality in authority between the office-bearers of the Synod executive or the Moderation and other ministers and elders in the RCZ.

The term of office of the Moderator¹⁷² and the General Secretary¹⁷³ has a period which stretches up to six years in office. The moderator is the presiding officer of the meeting according to the guidelines of the principles of the Reformed church government (Janssen, 2000:217). The church government of the RCZ should be guided by the principles of church government of other

¹⁷² Refer to Chapter 2, 2.4.3.5 the moderator's post.

¹⁷³ Refer to chapter 2, 2.5.3.4 the general secretary's post.

Reformed family churches, inter alia, the administrative structure of the RCZ¹⁷⁴ as shown in Fig 5 of this chapter. Structures of church government such as that of the church council, Presbytery, and Synod will not be involved in the administration of schools, hospitals, or business units because the core business of the church is to preach the gospel. The administration structure shown on the organogram reflects the hierarchical structure whereby the Moderature through the Synodical committee will spend much of their time supervising all the boards on the organogram¹⁷⁵.

The moderator is referred to as the head or leader of the church during his/her term of office (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:36). In the Reformed system of the church government Jesus Christ is the only one to be referred to as the 'Head of the Church'.

In this regard one of the presbyteries at the Synod assembly which was held at Morgenster mission in August 2002, presented a motion that, because of the pressure of work, the church should create a full-time office for the Moderator (Synod Minutes, 2002:23)¹⁷⁶. However, after deliberations on the issues by the delegates, it was resolved that the moderator should not have a full-time post.

The RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* (2017:36) states that the Moderator and the General Secretary are the representatives of the RCZ in all Ecumenical assemblies and they are the only two office-bearers to speak and respond to all issues, be it through the media or newspapers. This is good for the security and confidentiality of all matters of the church but there is a tendency of creating hierarchical offices for members of the Moderature, at the expense of the whole church.

The office of the Actuary of the RCZ is responsible for the ordination of candidate ministers, for whom the church is opening branches in other countries, yet ministers are supposed to be ordained in their respective congregations. Because of this it means the Actuary should travel in

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Figure 5 the organogram of the RCZ.

¹⁷⁵ The organogram is in the Strategic plan for the RCZ which was adopted by the Synodical Committee of 19 July, 2019.

¹⁷⁶ The same matter was brought forward by another presbytery at a Synod assembly which was held at Zimuto Mission from 27-31 August 2014. Act 66 reads, "it is our desire as a church that it is high-time for the Moderator to be full-time with an Office at the Church Headquarters".

and out of the country ordaining candidate ministers of the Word into the ministry. In doing this, the RCZ is creating the office of the Actuary to be more special than any other office, and therefore, the issue of equality among ministers of the Word is losing its grip (being jeopardised) (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2010:55 & 2017:37).

The Church Order of the RCSA (2017:4) article 4, the last part, reads: ‘Finally, the public ordination of the person in question in the presence of the congregation and of the deputies of the classis according to the form, is prescribed for this purpose’.

The researcher is of the opinion that the committee of the presbytery shall stand upon and perform the ordination of the candidate ministers, in consultation with the national Actuary. The office of the church treasurer was discussed in chapter 2¹⁷⁷ and we have seen that this office-bearer assumes the post through qualifications. The treasurer is an employee of the church, and that qualifies the officer to be an official member of the Moderature, the Synodical committee and the Synod. Our argument here is that the office of the deacons is a practical ministry and that they should not participate in matters of church government. It is true that the Treasurer of the RCZ oversees all the finances and is the custodian of church finances. Church government is the duty of the ministers of the Word and elders, be it at church council, presbytery and Synod. The minutes of the Synod which was held at Pamushana Mission on 23 August 1972 and the following days, shows that the Church Treasurer was not a member of the Moderamen neither of the Synodical Committee but was a member of the Finance Committee (Synod Minutes, 1972:28-29)¹⁷⁸. The Synod Minutes mentioned here, are proof that the RCZ has theologically deviated from the proper and laid-down system of church government of the Church Order of Dort (1619).

According to Plaatjies Van Huffel (2014:36), one of the fundamental reformed church polity principles is self-government under the sole headship of Christ. The church is described as the body of Christ and Jesus Christ is the only Head. It is not in accordance with the Reformed

¹⁷⁷ Cf. 2.4.3.6. The post of the RCZ in the RCZ is discussed.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Minutes of the Synod of the African Reformed Church which was held in Bulawayo on 26 August 1975 and the following days (1975:96) and Minutes of the Synod of the RCZ which was held at Gutu Mission from 18 August 1981 onwards.

principles of church government to refer to the moderator or the Moderature as the leaders of the church.

With all these developments discussed concerning the offices of the church council, presbytery and the synod, one might ask the question whether there is equality among office-bearers in the RCZ. The answer might be “yes” but on the other hand it might be “no”. It might be “no” because the church government system of the RCZ is moving the church governing authority of the church council (ministers of the Word and Elders) to deacons also. Secondly the church is transferring the governing authority of the church council to individual offices of the Synod Executive, namely to the offices of the Moderator, General Secretary, Actuary and the Treasurer. Equality among all ministers of the Word, elders and deacons has to be maintained and respected in order for the RCZ to remain the relevant system of church government as it was formulated and arranged in the Church Order of Dort¹⁷⁹ (1619). Strauss (2013:132) mentions that the Reformed principle for church government is the principle of an anti-hierarchy in both church offices and assemblies. The authors above are advocating that the authority and independence of all church assemblies must be respected.

5.4.3.5. Equality of Office-bearers

Jesus Christ is the founder, King, and Head of the church. Hayes (1999:53) declares that when reading the Scripture, we find that the focus is clearly on Christ as the Head of His church (Col. 1:18). Strauss (2013:134) declares that the principle for a Reformed church government is that submitting the authority of the Word is submitting the authority of Christ as Head of the church through his Spirit. Offices in the church are to be guided with the Bible in executing their duties. Plaatjies Van Huffel (2014: 36) mentions that one of the fundamental Reformed church government principles is self-government under the sole headship of Christ¹⁸⁰.

We as reformers, declare that our yardstick of church government is the Word of God which the Synod of Dort used to base its deliberations on when it drafted the Church Order of Dort (1619).

¹⁷⁹ See Annexure 2.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. 4.6.2 where Reymond (2004:148) mentions that authority of offices in all assemblies is the same no hierarchy system in the Church because there is only one Head who is Jesus Christ.

The Church Order of the RCSA (2017:60), records in article 84 that no church, minister of the Word, elder, or deacon shall in any way dominate other churches, ministers, elders or deacons, respectively (RCSA Church Order, 2017:60). Vorster (1999:151ff) reports that Christ rules His church through the Holy Spirit and the Word and cannot be substituted by any man or human institution. Christ uses the ministries of the respective offices as equal instruments. These ministries have different callings but even though they are being used by Christ to rule over his church they are Instruments and cannot be placed in a hierarchical order, maintains Vorster (1999:151). The governance of the church is also manifested in the quest of believers to confirm their ministries and relationship to the teachings of the Bible, say Brand and Norman (2004:4-5).

DeMoor (2010:23) says the following:

Equality shall be maintained among ministers of the Word with respect to the duties of their office and in all other matters as far as possible, according to the judgement of the consistory and, if necessary, of the classis. Likewise equality shall be maintained among elders and deacons. There shall be no lordship in God's church, whether of one church over another church, of one minister over the other ministers, or of one elder or deacon over other elders or deacons.

The system of church government in the RCZ should reflect that Christ is the Head of the Church rather than creating some organisational structure through which the focus of the church will be on the leadership such as the Moderature. The problem of directing the activities or government of the church towards the leadership of the church, will make the local congregations through their church councils, to not be actively participatory in the governance of the church. If the model of church government is dominated by a hierarchy of leadership, the serving ministry will be replaced by ruling elders who will form what is called a Collegialist¹⁸¹ system of church government (Vorster, 1999:152).

For the RCZ to remain relevant to the system of the Reformed principles of church government it should review or reform the Church Order guided by the Bible and the Church Order of Dort which are the blueprints of the Church Orders of the Reformed Churches worldwide. Transferring and centralising church government to broader assemblies will result in Collegialist

¹⁸¹ This is whereby the local church such as the congregation is regarded as a subordinate branch of a Synod.

government. In short, the fundamentals of the Collegialist type of government, will be explained. This will help us to determine whether the equality of office is still maintained in the RCZ.

5.5 Collegialism

Collegial church governance describes the church as a society of voluntary members independent of the self-governing state, with the authority entrusted to its members. The father of this system was CM Pfaff (1686-1780), says Ekitala (2018:38).

The Collegial form of church governance is the reserve of the Reformed and Presbyterian system because the original power of church government is vested in the church council, declares Berkhof, (1949:403). The RCZ system of church government is sound, in principle, but the researcher is of the opinion that at root level the Collegialist system of church government will invade the church if the issue of equality of offices is not addressed.

According to Vorster (1999:13), in Collegialism, the church as an institute is seen as the source of ecclesiastical authority. The offices in the church are based on the institute and not on the rule of Christ as the Head of the Church. He (Vorster) maintains that in this system the church functions as a society with various branches. The synod and the office-bearers of the synod have the highest authority, whilst the offices in the local church are subordinate. The fellowship of the church is based on the principle of hierarchy (Vorster, 1999:13). However the Christian church is not a democracy, but a Christocracy where the rule of Christ is supreme. Anon. (2013:25) argues that decisions made in the church must have the basis in the Bible, not in a majority vote.

Furthermore, Vorster (1999:13) holds that the classis, regional synod and general synod are seen as independent higher meetings, each as a legal entity, where a majority of votes and not the Biblical principles, determine the decisions of that particular body. Du Plooy (2002:13) declares that the authority of the Bible is supreme in the Reformed Theology. Leadership in the church must illustrate the seriousness of abiding by the teachings of the Bible as the primary sources of offices in relationship to church government matters. The elected chairman of the synod becomes the mouthpiece of the church. This tendency of hierarchy is already being practised in

the RCZ where the Moderator is the mouthpiece of the church and represents the church at all gatherings of the church and even in all ecumenical meetings (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:36).

Ekitala (2018:39) contends that according to Bouwman (2000:30) there are three distinctive characteristics of the collegial system of church government:

1. Collegial church government recognises no authority from heaven.
2. This form of church government finds its authority based in the people themselves.
3. The collegial system is, like congregationalism, a democratic form of church order and government. The voice of the majority is the highest authority.

Considering the system of church government in the RCZ, one is obliged to conclude that the church is no longer using the Reformed system of church government where the authority of the church has its seat in the local church council. The Church Order of Dort as the product of the Bible, acknowledges and asserts that Christ is the King of the kingdom of God and the Head of the people of God, i.e., the church, maintains Vorster (1999:10).

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the relevance of the RCZ's system of church government, inter alia, to the principles of the New Testament and the teachings of the Church Order of Dort and other Church Orders of the Reformed Churches such as the Reformed Churches of South Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church of the Cape Synod. The main purpose of this chapter was to understand the relevance of the RCZ's doctrine of church government and how the church managed and developed its system of church government to remain relevant to the Church Order of Dort and that of other Reformed Churches.

The Church Order of the RCSA (2017:2) mentions four types of offices, namely the minister of the Word, professors at Theological School, Elders and Deacons. The Church Order of the RCSA is derived from the original article 2 of the Church Order of Dort. The Church Order of the RCZ (RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo*, 2017:30-31) mentions five offices which are the office of the minister of the Word, evangelist, youth counsellor, elders and deacons/deaconesses. The

difference which was observed was that in the RCZ system of church government all five the offices participate in matters of church government even though the evangelists and youth counsellors do not have voting rights but they can be voted in for the post of youth coordinators in their respective presbyteries. As already indicated by Rutoro (2007:91) the missionaries were using the mission-board type of administration, whereby white ministers started with mission congregations. The researcher was of the opinion that they combined the system of church government and the administration of mission stations. As a result of this scenario the Church deviated from the original system of Church government.

Contrary to this development, the RCSA maintains that only the ministers of the Word and elders are the offices which may participate in matters of church government, namely the church council, presbytery, regional synod and the General Synod. The RCZ changed the system by incorporating the office of the deacon into matters of church government. More so than the former elders and deacons can be elected as delegates to the presbytery and the Synod. The Church Order of Dort¹⁸² (1619) declares that the ministers of the Word and elders are the only members of the church council. Article 38 of the Church Order of Dort and the RCSA, (2017:28) mentions that deacons may be considered as members of the church council by way of local arrangement if the church council has a small number of elders (fewer than three elders).

In the RCZ, the system of church government has drastically changed from presbytery and synod since the posts of leaders are no longer expiring due to the closure of the sessions of the presbytery and synod and these boards have assumed the highest authority which created the principle of hierarchy in the church. Vorster (1999:13) declares that office-bearers of the synod have the highest authority while the offices in the local church are subordinate. Furthermore, majority votes and not Biblical principles determine the decisions of that particular body or assembly.

Because of these changes the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe and its international congregations have departed from the teachings of the Bible and the customary rules of the Church Order of

¹⁸² See Annexure 2.

Dort and of other Reformed Churches across the globe due to the principles and system of church government. The issue of a proper Church Order is mentioned by Van den Broeke, (2018:8) where he declares that:

A church order, also a reformed church order, is theological in content and (church) juridical in its framework. However, from the perspective of a reformed church order, this framework reveals also something about the theological expression of the nature of the reformed church. It is not only a juridical framework, but also theological. The chapters or paragraphs that compose together the church order also expresses the doctrina and disciplina of the reformed church.

The RCZ, must go all out against the tendencies of hierarchy and attempt to remain relevant by acknowledging that there is no higher office in the church because Christ is the first and last authority of the Church. The system of church government like any other which is reformed in the Word, should recognise Christ as the Head and Founder of the Church.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary and conclusion of this study. The study has attempted to make a theological evaluation of the government system in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The objective of this study was to discover the relevance of the government system, and of, inter alia, the principles of the Bible and the teachings of the Church Order of Dort (1619). This chapter also includes some closing remarks from preceding chapters.

6.2 Summary of preceding chapters

6.2.1 Research Introduction

The research introduction aimed at undertaking a theological evaluation of the government system in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The church government system in the RCZ originated from the teachings of the Bible as its primary source, as well as that of the Church Order of Dort. This government system is a tradition that must be passed on to the Christian church in this world of the present which is changing every day. Regardless of the changes of time, the RCZ should stay in a position to manage changes without compromising the principles of the Bible on matters of church government.

6.2.2 Historical development and growth of the RCZ

The historical development and growth of the RCZ started way back in 1891 from that of a missionary church and grew to an autonomous church in 1962. The study has aimed to indicate the development of the church council, presbytery, synod and leadership style of the church from the period of the missionaries.

The second chapter indicated that the missionaries had started the church council which was composed of elders and ministers of the Word as offices who were taking care of all the matters of church government.

Various systems of spreading the gospel were introduced such as education, medicine, literature translation, radio-broadcasting, evangelism, and fellowship groups. These were used as the means of disseminating the gospel. The Church used an all-inclusive approach in her way of doing mission. Yet, because the church had been established by white missionaries from South Africa, it lasted a long time under the leadership of the missionaries.

This second chapter has established that the system of church government of the RCZ is now independent from the mother- Church in South Africa. The governance of the RCZ is done through the Church Council, Presbytery and the Synod as the highest decision- making board. The offices of the minister of the Word, elder and deacon participate in matters of church government. The establishment of the permanent offices in the major assemblies such as the presbytery and synod, is one of the developments in the system of church government in the RCZ. The synod of the RCZ is referred to as the '*Supreme*' body of the Church under the leadership of the Synod Executive comprising the Moderator, Vice Moderator, Synod Secretary, Vice Synod Secretary, Actuary, General Secretary, Vice General Secretary and Treasurer. This chapter concludes by admitting that it is not the policy of the Reformed system of church government to create permanent offices for major assemblies when they are not in session.

6.2.3 Historical perspective of the doctrine of church government

The primary characteristic of the doctrine of church government is that there are different forms of church government, namely, the Episcopalian, congregational and the Presbyterian/reformed system of church government.

This third chapter established that the ecclesiastical developments of church government used the teachings which were accepted at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) as the outline in structuring the systems of church government of the Reformed Churches worldwide and the RCZ is not the exception. The Church is the body of Christ who is the Head, and He is the one who ordained the offices as instruments to govern His Church through the use of church officers -- these form various ecclesiastical assemblies such as the church council (consistory), classis (presbyteries), regional synod, national synod and general synod. The church council is the only assembly with

permanent offices. The ministers of the Word and elders are the only offices permitted to participate regarding the discussion of matters of church government (Church Order of the Dort (1618-1619)).

This study revealed that in the Reformed system of church government there are no uniquely-regulated powers but the office-bearers complement one another because of the concept of encompassing the priesthood of all believers. More so, the ecclesiastical assemblies work hand-in-hand, from the local assembly to the major assemblies. Furthermore there is equality between church officers, where the office of the minister of the Word is ordained for life whilst the office of the elders and deacons functions for a limited time when they are replaced by others.

The evaluation of the historical development of the system of church government since the Church Order of Dort 1618 -1619 in this chapter, provided an outstanding example to be followed by the RCZ in her structure of church government.

6.2.4 The Biblical concept of the doctrine of church government

Chapter 4 aimed at the theological evaluation of the biblical concepts of the doctrine of church government like, inter alia, the government system in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The theological principles expressed by the New Testament teachings on church government are the mainstays on which the Reformed system of church government rests, all-inclusively; this too originated at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) upon which it reposes as the basis for evaluating the government system in the RCZ.

This study indicates that the local church under the spiritual governance of the minister of the Word, elders and deacons is complete and is an autonomous legal entity under the supervision of the church council. In the New Testament there is mention of major assemblies in the book of Acts (Acts 15) where we read about the Council at Jerusalem. People from different countries assembled and deliberated on what was taking place in their churches regarding the preaching of the Word. The findings validated that the RCZ needs to re-examine its policies to straighten out its structures of church government by means of the principles spelled out in the Bible.

This chapter confirmed that the teachings of the Bible (New Testament) and the Reformed teachings on the classifications of church government, should form the groundwork for the establishment of the RCZ.

6.2.5 The relevance of the RCZ's church government

Chapter 5 of this study aimed, in a theological way, to evaluate the relevance of the government system in the RCZ - among other things i.e. the principles of the teachings of the New Testament and the Church Order of Dort (1619). There are four offices mentioned in the Church Order of Dort, namely the minister of the Word, the professors of the Theological School, the elders and the deacons. The main emphasis from the Bible and the Church Order of Dort is that the office of the minister of the Word and that of the elders, are the only offices mandated to deal with matters of church government.

This study indicated that the Church Order of the RCZ set up five offices namely, the office of the minister of the Word, evangelist, youth counsellor, elders and deacons/deaconesses. The difference which we observed, was that in the RCZ structure of church government, all five offices participate in matters of church government even though the evangelists and youth counsellors do not have voting rights; they can, however be elected/voted in for the post of youth coordinators in their respective presbyteries. We also observed that deacons can be delegated to presbytery and synod meetings to participate in issues of church government.

This study indicated that the system of church government in the RCZ has been significantly altered from the presbytery and synod, so much so, that the posts of the leaders did not expire at the closing of the session of the presbytery and synod; these boards, in fact, assumed the highest authority which created the principle of hierarchy in the church. The study indicated that office-bearers of the synod have the uppermost authority while the offices in the local church are subservient. In addition, majority votes and not the Biblical principles determine the resolutions of that particular body or gathering.

6.3 Recommendations

In light of the discussion of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations for the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe in order for her to be theologically relevant in her government system as prescribed in the Bible:

The RCZ must use the framework and articles of the Church Order as they are laid down in the Church Order of Dort (1619). First and foremost the Church Order of the RCZ and the book of Rules and Regulations must be separated. The church must be encouraged to respect the principles of church government, so that the ministers and elders are the only offices to participate in matters concerning the government of the Church. The RCZ should revisit sections 8, 10 and 11 of its Rules and Regulations of the Church. This is where the RCZ deviated from the principles of church government through executive committees at presbytery and synod level. Also to be revised in the RCZ *Bhuku yoMurairo* are articles 15, 24, 43, and 48-51. These articles must be reformulated in order to encourage a process of reforming the church government system.

The researcher encourages the RCZ to respect what was started by missionaries in the formation of the church council because only ministers of the Word and elders were the offices involved with matters of church government.

The church must stick to its mandate of preaching the gospel through the guidance of the office of the Minister of the Word (Prophet), the office of the elder (King) and the office of the Deacon (Priest), as referred to in Chapter 4 of this study. Furthermore the governance of the church must be separated from the administration of other institutions such as schools, hospitals, and business units. The researcher recommends further studies to be carried on so that the church will remain focused on the preaching of the Word as its mandate.

The researcher recommends that the issue of fixed governing systems /permanent systems at presbyteries and synods must be reviewed because it is not Biblically- supported and it is not stated in the Church Order of Dort, which is our blueprint for the church order as a Reformed

Church. Therefore, I recommend that the church should yield the powers of church government to the local church council. The Synod Executive must be a temporary system which ceases to exist at the expiry/end of the session of the presbytery or the synod meetings.

6.4 Conclusion

Having made some remarks on the summary of the theological relevance of the government system in the RCZ, the teachings of the Bible on church government must be regarded as the primary source for good governance of the church under the Headship of Christ as the Founder of the Church.

The recommendations made above must not be observed negatively but should be used as a stepping- stone and a point of departure for evaluating the Church's systems of church government in a theological way, i.e., which pronounces that Christ is the Head of the church and that He manages His Church through the offices. The key to accomplishing this, is by evaluating the principles of church government, as well as, among other things, the teachings of the New Testament on the subject matter.

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ANNEXURE 1: CHURCH ORDER OF DORT (1618-1619)

FORMULATED IN THE NATIONAL SYNOD CONVENED AND HELD BY THE ORDER OF THE HIGH AND MIGHTY STATES GENERAL OF THE UNITED NETHERLANDS, AT DORDTRECHT, IN THE YEARS 1618-1619.

1. To maintain good order in the Church of Christ, it is necessary to have in it offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline, concerning which [matters the following articles] appropriately deal with.

CONCERNING THE OFFICES

2. There are four kinds of offices: ministers of the Word, Doctors (Professors), elders, and deacons.

3. No one, though he be a professor, elder or deacon shall be permitted to enter the ministry of the Word and sacraments without having been lawfully called thereto; and if anyone acts contrary thereto and, having been frequently admonished, does not desist, the classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way.

4. The lawful calling of those who formerly have not been in office, both in the cities and in the country, consists: first, in their election, which shall be carried out after previous fasting and prayer by the consistory and deacons, and this shall not take place without correspondence with the Christian authorities of the respective place, and the foreknowledge or advice of the classis where until now this has been customary. Second, in the examination or investigation both of doctrine and life which shall be done by the classis in the presence of the deputies of the synod or some of the same. Third, in the approbation and approval of the authorities, and thereafter of the members of the local Reformed congregation, when the name of the minister having been announced in the churches for fourteen days (two weeks), no objection is presented. Finally, in the public ordination in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with proper stipulations and questions, admonitions, prayer and laying on of hands by the minister who conducts the ordination service (or any others, if there are more ministers present) according to the form for this purpose, with the understanding that the laying on of hands may be done in the classical meeting for the newly graduated minister who is sent to the Churches under the Cross.

5. Inviting ministers who are now already in the ministry of the Word and calling them to another congregation shall take place by the

same method of calling as above, both in the cities and in the country, by the consistory and deacons with the advice and approbation of the classis, to whom the aforesaid called [minister] shall present good ecclesiastical credentials of doctrine and life. And having thus been approved by the magistrate of the respective place and having been presented to the congregation for fourteen days, as above, they shall be installed with previous stipulations and prayers. Without abridging what is previously said, anyone [who has] a valid gift of speaking or any other gift insofar as it can be used in an edifying way without detriment to God's Church and to the good order of the church, the government and synods of the respective Provinces will do well to take note of these things and maintain the necessary order for the best interests of the churches.

6. Also no minister may accept a ministry in any particular manors, hospitals or otherwise unless he has previously been admitted and permitted to do so in accordance with the previous articles and he shall no less than others be subject to the Church Order.

7. No one shall be called to the ministry of the Word without being stationed in a specific place, unless he is sent to preach in various places in the Churches under the Cross or otherwise to establish (new) churches.

8. No schoolmasters, artisans or others who have not followed the prescribed course of study for the ministry shall be admitted to the ministry, unless there is assurance of their singular gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense, and discretion, together with gifts of public speaking. When such persons present themselves for the ministry, the classis shall (if the synod approves) first examine them, and after the classis by the examination finds them acceptable, it shall allow them to exhort for a time, and then further deal with them as it judges shall be edifying.

9. Novices, priests, monks and those who leave any sect shall not be admitted to the ministry except with great care and caution after they have also first been tested for a certain time.

10. A minister once lawfully called may not leave the congregation where he has been unconditionally accepted to accept a call elsewhere without the approval of the consistory and the deacons and of those who formerly have been in the office of elder and deacon, together with the approval of the magistrate and the foreknowledge of classis. Likewise, no other church may accept him before he has presented a lawful testimony of his departure from the church and classis where he has served.

11. On the other hand the consistory, as representing the congregation, shall also be bound to provide their ministers with adequate support and are not to dismiss them without the knowledge and

judgment of classis, which in case of lack of support shall also judge whether or not the aforesaid ministers are to be transferred.

12. Since a minister of the Word, once lawfully called as above, is bound to the service of the church for life, he shall not be allowed to enter a secular occupation except for great and weighty reasons of which the classis shall take note and judge.

13. If it happens that some ministers because of age, sickness or otherwise become incapable of performing their ministry, they shall nevertheless in spite of this retain the honor and title of a minister, and shall be honorably supported in their need by the church which they have served (likewise the widows and orphans of the ministers generally).

14. If any ministers for the aforesaid or any other reasons must leave their office for a time (which shall not be done without the advice of the consistory), they shall nevertheless at all times be and remain subject to the call of the congregation.

15. No one is permitted, having left the ministry of his church or being in no fixed ministry, to go preaching here and there without the consent of the synod or classis; so also no one may preach or administer the sacraments in another church without the consent of that consistory.

16. The office of the ministers is to continue in prayer and the ministry of the Word, to administer the sacraments, to watch over their colleagues, the elders and deacons, together with the whole congregation, and finally to exercise church discipline with the elders and to see to it that everything is done decently and orderly.

17. Equality shall be maintained among the ministers of the Word concerning the duties of their office, as also in other things as much as possible, according to the judgment of the consistory and (if necessary) of the classis, which shall also be maintained among the elders and deacons.

18. The office of the Doctors or Professors of Theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend sound doctrine against heresies and errors.

19. The churches shall exert themselves that there are theological students who are supported *ex bonis publicis* (out of the general treasury).

20. In churches where there are more competent ministers the use of exhorters shall be introduced in order by such means to prepare persons for the ministry of the Word, following in this the order especially prepared for this by the synod.

21. All consistories shall see to it that there are good school masters who not only teach the children reading, writing, languages and liberal arts but also train them in godliness and in the catechism.

22. Elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the consistory and the deacons, so that according to its circumstances each church is at liberty to propose to the congregation as many elders as are needed in order that (unless some obstacle arise) after having been approved and certified by it they may be ordained with public prayers and stipulations; or a double number in order to have half of them chosen by the congregation and to be ordained into office in the same manner, using the prescribed form for this.

23. The office of elder is, besides what is said above in article 16 to be (their office) in common with the minister of the Word, to see to it that the ministers together with their other helpers and deacons faithfully exercise their office, and according to the circumstance of time and place to conduct family visiting for the edification of the congregation insofar as this can be done before and after the Lord's Supper, especially to comfort the members of the congregation, to teach. And also to exhort others to profess the Christian religion.

24. The same procedure which applies to the elders shall be maintained in the election, approbation and ordination of deacons.

25. The specific office of the deacons is diligently to gather the alms and other goods for the poor and to distribute the same faithfully and diligently according to the requirements of the needy, both residents and strangers, by common consent, to visit and comfort the distressed, and to see to it that the alms are not misused, of which they shall give an account in the consistory and also (if anyone wants to be present) in a congregational meeting, at such a time as the consistory shall see fit.

26. In places where there are charity workers or other distributors of alms the deacons shall seek to keep in close correspondence with them to the end that the alms may better be distributed among those who have the greatest need.

27. Elders and deacons shall serve for two years, and each year one-half the number shall retire and others installed in their place, unless the circumstances and welfare of any church demand otherwise.

28. Since the office of Christian authorities is to promote church services in every way, to recommend the same to their subjects, to help the ministers, elders and deacons in all existing need and to protect them by their good order, all ministers, elders, and deacons are duty bound

diligently and sincerely to impress upon the whole congregation the obedience, love and respect they owe the

Magistrates. All ecclesiastical persons shall set a good example to the congregation in this, and by proper respect and correspondence seek to awaken and maintain the favor of the government, toward the churches to the end that each one on each side doing his duty in the fear of the Lord, all suspicion and distrust may be prevented and good unity be maintained for the welfare of the churches.

CONCERNING ECCLESIASTICAL ASSEMBLIES

29. Four kinds of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be maintained: the consistory, the classical meetings, the particular synods, and the general or national (synod).

30. In these assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only that shall be dealt with that could not be finished in the minor [assemblies], or that which concerns the churches of the major assembly in common.

31. If anyone complains that he has been wronged by a decision of a minor assembly, he may appeal to a major ecclesiastical assembly and that which is decided by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding unless it is proved to conflict with the Word of God or with the articles adopted in this general synod as long as these are not changed by another general synod.

32. The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin with calling on God's name and be closed with thanksgiving.

33. Those delegated to the assemblies shall bring along their credentials and instructions, signed by those who delegated them. Only those [delegated] shall be entitled to vote.

34. In all assemblies a clerk shall be chosen in addition to the president, who shall diligently write down that which is to be recorded.

35. The office of the president is to state and to explain what is to be considered, to see to it that everyone observes good order in speaking, to order the wrangler and those too vehement in speaking to be silent, and, for those who give heed. Further, his office shall cease when the assembly adjourns.

36. The classis has the same authority over the consistory that the particular synod has over the classis, and the general synod over the particular.

37. In every congregation there shall be a consistory consisting of ministers of the Word and elders, who shall meet at least every week at which the minister of the Word (or ministers, if there are more than one) shall preside in turn and govern the proceeding.

Also, if the magistrates of the respective places wish, they may have one or two of their number, who are members of the church, [meet) with the consistory to listen and to deliberate concerning matters that take place.

38. It is understood that in places where the consistory is to be newly established, the same cannot take place except with the advice of the classis. Where the number of elders is very small, the deacons shall be included in the consistory.

39. In places where as yet there is no consistory, the classis shall in the meantime do what the consistory is charged to do according to the provisions of this church order.

40. Similarly the deacons shall meet every week in order prayerfully to transact the business pertaining to their office, to which the ministers shall take good heed and, if necessary, be present.

41. The classical meetings shall consist of neighboring churches, each of which shall delegate with proper credentials one minister and one elder to meet at the place and time [set] at the end of each meeting as was seen fit (nevertheless, this is not to be postponed more than three months). In these meetings the ministers shall preside in turn or otherwise be chosen to preside by the same assembly, but the same person may not be chosen twice in succession. Further, the president among other things shall ask each one whether the consistory meetings are held in their churches, whether church discipline is exercised, whether the poor and schools are provided for; finally, whether there is anything for which they need the judgment and help of classis for the proper government of their churches. The minister who was appointed by the previous classis for this purpose shall deliver a short sermon from God's Word, which the others shall critique, and, if it is lacking in anything, they shall point this out. Finally, in the last meeting before the particular synod those who are to attend that synod shall be chosen.

42. In any place where there is more than one minister, they shall all be allowed to appear in classis and have a vote, except in matters that concern their persons or churches in particular.

43. At the close of classical and other major assemblies censure shall be exercised with respect to those who have done anything worthy of censure in the meeting, or who have scorned the admonitions of the minor assembly.

44. The classis shall also authorize at least two of the oldest, most experienced and qualified ministers, annually to visit all the churches in the cities as well as in the country to discern whether the ministers, consistories and schoolmasters fulfill their offices faithfully, maintain purity of doctrine, maintain the accepted order in everything, and promote the edification of the congregation, together with that of the youth as is befitting. They shall do this as much as possible with both words and deeds in order that they may fraternally admonish those who are found negligent in one thing or another, and may help by word and deed to direct everything to the peace, up building and the greatest profit of the churches and schools. Each classis may continue these visitors in their function as long as they wish, unless the visitors themselves, for reasons concerning which the classis shall judge, ask to be discharged.

45. The church in which the classis, also the particular or general synod, meets shall be responsible for delivering the minutes of the meeting to the following one.

46. The instructions concerning matters that are to be considered in major assemblies shall not be written until the decision of preceding synods have been read so that what was once finished is not again proposed unless it is judged necessary to change it.

47. Every year, (unless need requires a shorter time) four or five or more neighboring classes shall meet, to which particular synod two ministers and two elders shall be delegated from each classis. At the close of the particular as well as of the general synod a church shall be designated which shall be charged to set the time and place of the next synod with the advice of classis.

48. Each synod shall be free to request and to continue correspondence with its neighboring synod or synods in such form as it shall judge most profitable for common edification.

49. Each synod shall also appoint certain persons in order to effect all that the synod has decided, both with the government and with the respective classes in its district, also in order together or with a smaller number to supervise all examinations of incoming ministers. Further, they shall extend help to the classes in all other difficulties that arise so that good unity, order and purity of doctrine is maintained and stabilized. They shall keep good records of all their actions in order to give a report thereof to the synod, and, if it is demanded, to give reasons. Also, they shall not be discharged from their task before the synod itself discharges them from it.

50. The National Synod shall ordinarily be held once every three years, unless there is a pressing need to meet earlier. To this (synod) two ministers and two elders from each particular synod, both of the Dutch and Walloon languages, shall be delegated. Further, the church which has the task of setting the time and place of the general synod (if it is to be called within three years) shall gather its particular synod, and inform the neighboring church which is of another language of this, which church shall send four persons there in order by common consent to decide concerning the time and place. The church which is chosen to convene the general synod, when

it has consulted with the classis concerning time and place, shall inform the government in time about the same, so that with its knowledge and (if it wishes also to send someone to the classics) this may be decided in the presence and with the advice of its deputies.

51. Since two languages are spoken in the Netherlands, it is considered advisable that the churches using the Dutch and Walloon languages have their own consistories, classical meetings, and particular synods.

52. Nevertheless it is advisable that in the cities where the aforesaid Walloon churches are found some ministers and elders of both sides should gather every month in order to promote good unity and correspondence with one another and as much as possible to support one another with advice according to need.

CONCERNING DOCTRINE, SACRAMENTS, AND CEREMONIES

53. Ministers of the word, as well as Professors of Theology (which is also fitting for other professors) shall subscribe to the Confession of Faith of the Netherlands churches. Ministers who refuse to do this shall *de facto* be suspended from their office by the consistory or classis until such time that they give a full explanation of this. If they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be completely deposed from their office.

54. Likewise, schoolmasters shall be required to subscribe to the articles as above, or in place of that to the Christian catechism.

55. No one of the Reformed religion shall undertake to have printed or otherwise distributed any book or writing produced or translated by himself or by another concerning religion unless the same has been examined and approved by the ministers of the Word of his classis, or by the particular synod of professors of theology of these provinces, including also the foreknowledge of his classis.

56. God's covenant shall be sealed for the children of Christians by baptism as soon as its administration can take place, and that in a public meeting when God's word is preached. But in places where few preaching services are held a certain day of the week shall be set aside to administer baptism extraordinarily. Nevertheless, this shall not take place without a sermon being preached.

57. Ministers shall do their best and strive to the end that the father present his child for baptism. In congregations where besides the fathers also godfathers or witnesses are taken to the baptism (which custom in itself is optional and should not be lightly changed) it is fitting that those be taken who hold to pure doctrine and are of pious behavior.

58. In the baptism of young children as well as of adults the minister shall use the forms of the institution and administration of baptism which have been respectively drawn up for that purpose.

59. Adults are by baptism in grafted into the Christian church and accepted as members of the church, and therefore are duty bound to partake of the Lord's Supper, which they shall promise to do at their baptism.

60. The names of those baptized together with those of the parents and witnesses as well as the date of baptism shall be recorded.

61. Only those shall be admitted to the Lord's supper who, according to the usage of the churches which they join, have made confession of the Reformed religion, together with having testimony of a godly walk, without which also those who come from other churches shall not be admitted.

62. Each church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it judges best contributes to edification, but with the understanding that the external ceremonies prescribed in God's word are not changed, all superstition is avoided, and that after the completion of the sermon and the general prayers from the pulpit the form for the Lord's Supper, together with the prayer pertaining to it, shall be read in front of the table.

63. The Lord's Supper shall be administered once every two months, as much as possible. It is also edifying, wherever the circumstances of the churches allow, that the same be done on Easter, Pentecost and Christmas. But in places where as yet there is no organized congregation, elders and deacons shall first be provisionally installed.

64. Since the evening prayers are in many places found to be fruitful, each church following this practice shall do what it deems to be most edifying. But whenever there is the desire to eliminate them, this shall not take place without the judgment of classis, together with that of the authority for the Reformed religion.

65. Where funeral sermons are not held, they shall not be introduced; and where they already have been accepted, diligence shall be exercised to do away with them by the most appropriate means.

66. In times of war, pestilence, national calamities, severe persecution of the churches and other general difficulties, the ministers shall petition the government that by its authority and order public fasting and prayer days may be designated and set aside.

67. The congregations shall observe, in addition to Sunday, also Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, with the following days. Since in most cities and Provinces of the Netherlands, besides these the days of the Circumcision and Ascension of Christ are also observed, all ministers, wherever this is still the custom, shall put forth effort with the authorities that they may conform with the others.

68. Ministers shall on each Lord's Day, ordinarily in the afternoon sermons, briefly explain the sum of Christian doctrine contained in the catechism which at present is accepted in the Netherlands Churches in such a way that it may be completed annually, following the division of the catechism itself made for that purpose.

69. In the churches only the 150 Psalms of David, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the 12 Articles of Faith, the Songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon shall be sung. It is left to the option of the churches whether to use or omit the song, O God, who art our Father.

70. Since it is found that up to the present various customs are everywhere observed in matrimonial matters, and because it is fitting to practice uniformity in this, the churches shall keep the custom which they have to this time observed, conformable to God's Word and previous ecclesiastical ordinances, until a general ordinance shall be made for this by the government with advice of the ministers (which shall be requested immediately) to which this church order refers in this article.

CONCERNING CENSURE AND ECCLESIASTICAL ADMONITIONS

71. Inasmuch as Christian discipline is spiritual (in character) and exempts no one from civil trial and punishment, as besides civil punishment ecclesiastical censure is necessarily demanded in order to remove the offense from the church of Christ.

72. When someone sins against the purity of doctrine or godly conduct, insofar as it is secret and has given no public offense, the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be maintained.

73. Secret sins concerning which the sinner, having been admonished by one person in private or before two or three witnesses, repents, shall not be brought before the consistory.

74. If someone, having been admonished in love concerning a secret sin by two or three persons does not listen, or otherwise has committed a public sin, such shall be reported to the consistory.

75. Concerning all such sins which by their nature were public or because ecclesiastical admonition has been despised have become public, the reconciliation (when certain signs of repentance are seen) shall take place publicly, by judgment of the consistory. In the country or in smaller cities where there is only one minister this must be done with the advice of two neighboring churches in such a form and manner as shall be judged fitting for the edification of each church.

76. One who obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory or who has committed a public or otherwise gross sin shall be barred from the Lord's Supper. If he, having been barred, shows no repentance after several admonitions, the extreme remedy, namely excommunication, shall finally be taken, following the form prepared for this according to the Word of God; but no one shall be excommunicated except with the previous advice of the classis.

77. Before proceeding to excommunication the obstinacy of the sinner shall be publicly announced to the congregation, explaining the sin, together with the diligence shown him in punishing, barring from the Lord's Supper and by many admonitions, and the congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. Three such admonitions shall take place. In the first, the sinner shall not be named so that he is somewhat spared. In the second, with the advice of classis his name shall be mentioned. In the third, the congregation shall be informed that unless he repents he shall be excommunicated from the fellowship of the churches so that his excommunication, if he remains obstinate, will take place with the tacit approbation of the churches. The time between the admonitions shall be left to the judgment of the consistory.

78. When an excommunicated person wishes to be reconciled with the congregation by way of repentance, it shall be announced to the congregation before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or otherwise beforehand according to circumstances, to the end that at the next Lord's Supper (insofar as no one knows of anything to bring forward to the contrary) he may be reinstated publicly with profession of his conversion, following the form for this purpose.

79. When ministers, elders or deacons commit a public gross sin which is a disgrace to the church or is punishable by the authorities, the elders and deacons shall immediately be deposed from office, but ministers shall be suspended. Whether the minister shall be completely deposed from office shall be up to the judgment of the classis.

80. Further, among the gross sins that are worthy of being punished by suspension or deposition from office these are the principal ones: false doctrine or heresy, public schism, public blasphemy, simony, faithless desertion of office or intrusion into another's office, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, filthy lucre, in short, all sins and gross offenses which make the perpetrator dishonorable before the world and which in any private member of the church would be considered worthy of excommunication.

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81. Ministers of the Word, elders and deacons shall exercise Christian censure among themselves and admonish one another in a friendly way concerning the exercise of their offices.

82. To those who move away from their congregations a certificate or testimony of their conduct shall be given by the decision of the consistory under the seal of the churches, or where there is no seal signed by two (persons).

83. Further, the poor who move for sufficient reasons shall be given assistance by the deacons with discretion, also notion on the back of their certificate the place where they wish to go and the help that has been given to them.

84. No church shall in any way lord it over another church, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons.

85. In indifferent matters the foreign churches which have different customs from our own shall not be rejected.

86. These articles concerning the lawful order of the churches have been so formulated and adopted by common consent that, if the welfare of the churches demands otherwise, they may and ought to be altered, added to or diminished. Nevertheless, no individual congregation, classis or synod shall be permitted to do this, but they shall diligently seek to maintain them until [it] is otherwise ordered by the General or National Synod.

So done and decided in the National Synod in Dordrecht the 28th of May, 1619.

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