

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

Prior to 1925, Potchefstroom was the closest centre for church activities for a large number of Gatsrand inhabitants.¹ The first denomination was established in the area only in that year.² Owing to the close relationship of the inhabitants of Gatsrand with the church history of Potchefstroom, it was not possible at all times to trace data dealing only with the church activities of these folk. In the minutes of church councils of congregations in Potchefstroom, mention is sometimes made of the ward and it was attempted to glean an image of the involvement of the inhabitants in church activities in the light of this information.

3.1 Religion from the settling of the Trekkers until 1948

Ever since the years of the initial settlement of the Trekkers in 1853, the inhabitants of the district of Potchefstroom tried to get a minister of religion. FG Wolmarans who acted as catechist for children in the trekker company of AH Potgieter and who subsequently settled in the Gatsrand, devoted himself to this matter. In 1852, Wolmarans acted as chairman of the church meeting at Hekpoort during which a letter was drafted to the Synod of the Reformed Church in The Hague (the Netherlands) to request that a minister of religion should be sent to the Trekkers. In the meantime, Wolmarans and another two elders appointed by the Trekkers took the initiative regarding the organisation of worship services.³

PJW SCHUTTE
Photo: S du Toit (ed.),
The Reformed Church in South Africa
1859-1959



¹ W.J. Badenhorst, *Geskiedenis van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Transvaal, 1842-1885*, pp.1-2.

² Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg - feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, p.3.

³ N. Dreyer, *Die rol van die Wolmarans-familie in kerk en staat teen die agtergrond van die Transvaalse geskiedenis...*, pp.20-22

Ministers from the Cape Colony sometimes visited the inhabitants of the district, conducted church services and christened children. The inhabitants of Gatsrand were not excluded during these journeys. In a report (26 December 1850), Reverend Andrew Murray mentions a day's journey that was undertaken on 15 October 1850 from Potchefstroom to Gatsrand. A worship service was held on the farm Rietfontein number 274 of JH Boshoff and children were christened as well. According to Murray, those who attended were attentive. During the reverend JL Cachet's return journey from Potchefstroom to Pretoria in 1866, he led a worship service at Nooitgedacht number 489 on the farm of J.J. Hoffman and also served the sacraments.⁴

After the reverend Dirk van der Hoff's arrival in 1853 as their first minister, the inhabitants to the north of the Vaal River, he compiled, with the help of elder FG Wolmarans, a church statute book.⁵ In the meantime, Van der Hoff started to conduct worship services at Potchefstroom. For every Trekker family, regular religious observances were an important and indispensable activity and they had no scruples about spending the long hours by ox-waggon to attend the three annual observances of communion in Potchefstroom.⁶

These journeys, which usually lasted three to four days for most inhabitants of the Gatsrand, were planned with great care. On these occasions, shopping was done, the market and the bazaar were paid visits and administrative issues were dealt with. Owing to the exhausting journey, few inhabitants attended the Sunday services. Church services in the ward were usually held on predetermined farms and were led by elders.⁷

The approval of the statute book by the church meeting (synod) in 1857 gave rise to dissatisfaction with a number of persons.⁸ Even before the approval of the statute book, PJW Schutte, a respected and influential leader and member of the church council of Mooi River, submitted a proposal that a minister of religion should be called for the discontented persons.⁹ There was discontent, inter alia, about the singing of hymns and a lack of

⁴ C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en godsdienstig leven der Boeren na den Grooten Trek*, pp.98, 311, 337. Verbatim-verslae van dié reise is in Spoelstra gepubliseer.

⁵ N. Dreyer, *Die rol van die Wolmarans-familie in kerk en staat teen die agtergrond van die Transvaalse geskiedenis...*, p.122. Die kerklike wette was die riglyne vir funksionering van kerkgenootskap op Potchefstroom.

⁶ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 1: Herinneringe P.F.J. van der Ryst, 23.9.1986. Vergelyk ook verw. 3: Bandopname K. du Preez, 6.11.1986.

⁷ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Onderhoud A.M.C. Pretorius. 3.4.1987.

⁸ J.L. Cachet, *Gedenkboek van het 50-jarige bestaan der Gereformeerde Kerk van Zuid-Afrika, 1859-1909*, p.10

⁹ S. du Toit, *Die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika, 1859-1959: Gedenkboek by geleentheid van die eeufees*, p.345.

scripturally correct (unerring) teaching from the Bible. It was decided that a Free Reformed Church should be founded. Those who joined this church would consequently be freed from the power of the state to which the Nederduitsch Reformed Church as state church was so closely associated. The goal was to be subject only to the authority of the Word of God – with a clear conscience.¹⁰

The reverend Dirk Postma, who arrived in the Transvaal in November 1858, joined the ranks of the discontented church members. Adverse weather conditions prevented Postma from arriving on time in Potchefstroom where he was to conduct a worship service on 7 November and spend Christmas with the reverend Dirk van der Hoff in response to the latter's invitation. Consequently, Postma had to spend the night of 6 November with elder PJW Schutte of Buffelsdoorn. On the Sunday of the seventh, there were both morning and afternoon services and the messages were based on 1 Samuel 7:12 and Psalm 37:5 respectively. News quickly spread that Postma was preaching at Buffelsdoorn; consequently both services were well attended.¹¹ This was the first time that Postma preached in the Transvaal – in the farmhouse at Buffelsdoorn. This served as the starting point whence Reformed Biblical teaching would be borne even farther into the Transvaal – via Scriptural preaching.¹²

PJW Schutte was the first signatory of the separation deeds to be submitted by 15 persons during a general church meeting on 12 January 1859 when they left the Nederduitsch Hervormde (or Dutch Reformed) Church.¹³ During the formal formation of the Reformed Church at Rustenburg on 12 February 1859, Schutte was elected as elder for the ward Mooi River. He was also church secretary.¹⁴ The church ward of which Schutte and his family were part, started off with 15 members.¹⁵ By 1860, the membership had increased to 72.

¹⁰ G.C.P. Van der Vyver, *Professor Dirk Postma, 1818-1890*, pp.193, 195, 245.

¹¹ Gereformeerde Kerkargief, verw. PV 72: Dominee Dirk Postma reisjoernaal, 1858-1859. Kyk ook G.C.P. van der Vyver, *Professor Dirk Postma, 1818-1890*, p.225.

¹² W.P. du Plessis, *Phillipus Jacobus Wilhelmus Schutte as kerkman* (MA-verhandeling, 1984), p.35. Die latere president van die ZAR, S.J.P. Kruger. was ook by die erediens teenwoordig.

¹³ S.J. du/Toit, *Die Gereformeerde Kerk van Zuid-Afrika, 1859-1909...*, p.345. Tydens die Groot Trek het die Kaapse Sinode besluit om die benaming Nederduitsch Gereformeerde in die plek van Nederduitsch Hervormde aan te neem. Die Trekkers het die ou benaming behou en tot en met 1885 gepraat van die Nederduitsch Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk. Kyk G.D. Scholtz, *Die geskiedenis van die Nederduits Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika, 1842-1885*, p.30.

¹⁴ Gereformeerde Kerk (TAB), verw. A1023: *Gedenkboek by geleentheid van die eeufees, 1859-1959*, p.20. Vergelyk ook J.L. Cachet, *Gedenkboek van het 50-jarige bestaan der Gereformeerde Kerk...*, p.23. Die wyk Mooirivier waarvan daar gepraat word, dui waarskynlik op die gemeentewyk Mooirivier wat die hele distrik van Potchefstroom ingesluit het.

¹⁵ W.P. du Plessis, *Phillipus Jacobus Wilhelmus Schutte as kerkman*, pp.92-93.

Prior to the founding of the Reformed congregation in Potchefstroom on 17 April 1863, the church members were divided into wards.¹⁶

After 1863, worship services at Potchefstroom were done away with, as was the case with ward services at Schoonspruit (currently Klerksdorp), as well as Vaal River and Gatsrand. Most of the Reformers in the Gatsrand hailed from the farms Buffelsdoorn, Deelkraal and Kaalplaats.¹⁷ This could be ascribed to the influence of PJW Schutte on his own family and on those living on neighbouring farms.¹⁸

In spite of the division in church ranks, the majority of members remained with the Nederduitsch Hervormde (or Dutch Reformed) Church. At a church meeting at Potchefstroom in 1859, a decision was made to appoint a building commission with a view to plan a larger church building than the existing one owing to the increase in membership numbers.¹⁹ FGA Wolmarans (son of FG Wolmarans of the farm Welverdiend in the Gatsrand) was a member of the commission that dealt with the finances and the planning of the envisaged new church building. During the inauguration of the new building on 24 February 1866, former elders FG Wolmarans and S Viljoen carried the Bible from the old to the new church building.²⁰

By 1866, services and christenings were regularly conducted on the farms Jachtfontein, Elandsfontein number 289, Rietfontein number 274, Wonderfontein,²¹ Doornfontein number 470 and Leeupoort.²² Marriage ceremonies, however, were performed at Potchefstroom.²³

In 1884, there was once again a spirit of discontent among members of the Dutch Reformed (or Reformed) Church. Dissatisfied members parted ways with the church and started the Nederduitsch Hervormde (Reformed) Church.²⁴

¹⁶ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (Geref-Kerkargief), verw. 1/1: Kerkraadnotule, 17.4.1863.

¹⁷ W.P. du Plessis, *Phillipus Jacobus Wilhelmus Schutte as kerkman*, pp.94-95. P.J.W. Schutte se ideaal om 'n teologiese skool op te rig is op 29 November 1869 in Burgersdorp verwesenlik. Die Sinode kon die skool nie alleen behartig nie en gevolglik is 'n Kuratorium in die lewe geroep. Ses lede wat jaarliks aangewys is, het die administrasie behartig. Schutte is as eerste kurator benoem en het die amp tot sy dood op 9 November 1873 beklee. Kyk A.P. Nel, "Buffelsdoorn-'n baken in ons kerk se geskiedenis", *Gereformeerde Vroueblad xxx(8)*, Januarie 1977, p.15. Vergelyk ook J.P. Jooste, *Die geskiedenis van die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika, 1859-1959*, p.114

¹⁸ Soos reeds in hoofstuk 2 vermeld, was daar plase wat onderverdeel is tussen families.

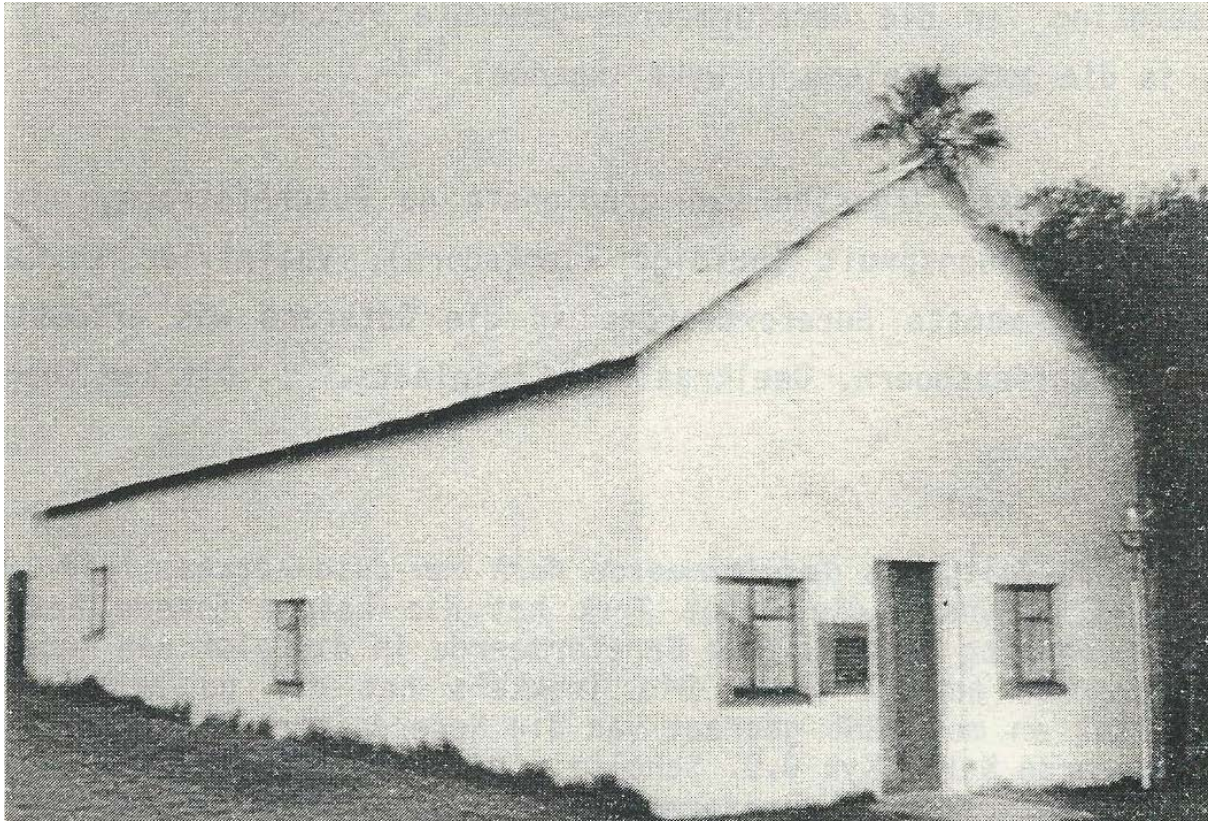
¹⁹ G.D. Scholtz, *Die geskiedenis van die Nederduits Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk...*, p.81.

²⁰ N. Dreyer, *Die rol van die Wolmarans-familie in kerk en staat teen die agtergrond van die Transvaalse geskiedenis...*, pp.133-134.

²¹ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (NG-Kerkargief), verw. AD-1 POT-1: Doopregister, 1867-1877. Vergelyk ook POT-1: Kerkraadnotules, 1885-1894.

²² Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname K. du Preez, 6. 11. 1986.

²³ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (NG-Kerkargief), verw. AO-3 POT-1: Huweliksregister, 1871-1888.



THE JACHTFONTEIN CHURCH BUILDING
Photo: Nederduitse Gereformeerde Congregation, Losberg
(Fochville)



CHURCH COUNCIL MEMBER BJJ VERMAAS
Photo: BJJ Vermaas (Jr) (Fochville)

²⁴ G.D. Scholtz, *Die geskiedenis van die Nederduits Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk...*, p.110. Afgesien van kleiner verskille, was een van die vernaamste redes vir die skeuring die keuse van die Kerk se naam: Daar is besluit op Nederduits Gereformeerd terwyl sommige Nederduitsch Hervormde verkies het. Kyk ook S. P. Engelbrecht, *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde gemeente Potchefstroom, 1842-1942*, p.125.

Inhabitants of especially the south-eastern and north-eastern farms in the Gatsrand associated themselves with the NH Church.²⁵ A reformed church member, field cornet JT Martins, built a church building on the farm Jachtfontein in 1890. This building was made available for services in the ward for the three sister congregations.²⁶ Inhabitants would, in spite of the church schism, regularly attend the weekly services at Jachtfontein or elsewhere even though there was not a minister of their own denomination.²⁷

On 7 July 1890, the church council of the NG congregation Potchefstroom decided, on recommendation of the investigation committee, on the congregation's border between Krugersdorp and Potchefstroom. Inhabitants of the northern parts of Gatsrand benefited by the location of the border. Farms that aligned with the Krugersdorp DR congregation were Wonderfontein, Vlakplaats, Rooipoort, Elandsfontein number 494, Driefontein numbers 591 and 614, as well as Rietfontein number 162.²⁸ Members of the NH Church in the north-eastern parts also attended worship services at Krugersdorp.²⁹

For the citizens of the Republic, the Anglo-Boer War was a dark time with regard to their church. Many women and children were held in concentration camps, the men were either doing military service in the commandos or had already been sent off to prisoner of war camps. Numerous women and children in the Gatsrand were removed from their farms and held as prisoners in concentration camps. Others had fled to live elsewhere outside the ward with relatives. Orderly functioning of church wards was therefore out of the question up to and including the end of the war in 1902. Spiritual ministering was, however, done in prisoner-of-war and concentration camps by ministers of religion.³⁰

Those who were fortunate enough to return to their farms, rejoined their respective congregations (Potchefstroom and Krugersdorp). By April 1912, the Dutch Reformed (DR) congregation elected deacons for the four church wards of the Gatsrand. Some of the wards had as many as 100 members who had to be visited. The Gatsrand ward of church council

²⁵ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Onderhoud A.M.C. Pretorius, 3.4.1987.

²⁶ I. van Wyk, "Landskoonmaker", *Die Boervrou*, Julie 1950, p.17. Huwelike is na die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog ook in hierdie gebou voltrek.

²⁷ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Onderhoud A.M.C. Pretorius, 3.4.1987.

²⁸ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (NG-Kerkargief), verw. POT-1: Kerkraadnotule, 7.7.1890. Die kerklike aktiwiteite van die inwoners van plase wat onder die Krugersdorp NG-gemeente gesorteer het, word nie in die verhandeling bespreek nie. In 1925 en 1935 het die gemeentegrense verander en is die plase by die nuwe gemeentes van Fochville ingedeel. Kyk Anon., *Halfeeufees NG Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, p.18.

²⁹ T. F. J. Dreyer (red.), *Almanak en Bybelse dagboek van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* 40, 1946, pp.57, 60

³⁰ J.W. Kok, *Sonderlinge vrug*, pp.11-12. Vergelyk ook Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname K. du Preez, 6.11.1986.

member BJJ Vermaas of Rhenosterfontein who had acted as chairperson at some church council meetings at Potchefstroom had no fewer than 160 members.³¹

Growth in the number of members in the DR congregation Potchefstroom probably was one of the reasons why church council member LCH Pretorius of Nooitgedacht number 661 proposed at the church council meeting of 8 April 1912 that an assistant minister should be called. The proposal was accepted and money was raised for this purpose in the church wards. Besides Potchefstroom town ward that raised £292 for the assistant minister, the congregation wards in the Gatsrand contributed the most, namely £290.³²

Up to and including 1924, the inhabitants of the Gatsrand attended worship services in their respective religious denominations and in accordance with the congregational boundaries in Potchefstroom and Krugersdorp. Weekly ward services were still conducted regularly.³³ The proclamation of Fochville as town in 1920 was one of the reasons that gave rise to the founding of the first congregations in the area, namely the NH congregation in 1925³⁴ and the DR congregation in 1935.³⁵ However, by 1948 members of the Gereformeerde Kerk still fell under the Potchefstroom congregation because their membership numbers did not yet meet the minimum required for a congregation of their own.³⁶ The Gereformeerde Church members in the Gatsrand were originally divided into two wards, namely Lower Gatsrand and Upper Gatsrand, each of which was represented in the Potchefstroom church council by one elder and one deacon.³⁷ It was especially the Schuttes of Buffelsdoorn that distinguished themselves in these respective offices, inter alia, PJ Schutte who served in the office of elder from 1904 until 1939.³⁸ He served in numerous advisory committees³⁹ and played an active role during church council meetings, inter alia, at a meeting of 12 February

³¹ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (NG-Kerkargief), POT-2: Kerraadnotule, 8.4.1912.

³² Potchefstroom congregation (DR Church Archives), POT-2: Church council meeting minutes of 8 April 1912. Also, compare those of 16 May 1912.

³³ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (NG-Kerkargief), POT-2: Kerraadnotule, 2.10.1916. Vergelyk ook 5.6.1922 en 2.9.1922. Kyk ook Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg- feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, p.6 en N.H. van der Walt (red.), *Almanak van die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika* 63,193B, p.77.

³⁴ T.F.J. Dreyer (red.), *Almanak en Bybelse dagboek van die Nederduitsch Hervozinde Kerk van Afrika*, 67,1946, p.57.

³⁵ Anon., *Halfeeufees NG-Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, p.B.

³⁶ B.J.V. Naude (red.), *Gedenkuitgawe: Ontvangs van poskoets te Oberholzer, 9-11 Februarie 1952*, p. 51. Tydens 'n kerkaadsvergadering van die Gereformeerde-gemeente Potchefstroom op 24 September 1932 is die kwessie van beskikbaarheid van erwe op Fochville vir kerkdoeleindes te berde gebring. Vanweë getalle is besluit om nie verder op dié moontlikheid in te gaan nie. Kyk Potchefstroom-Gemeente (Geref-Kerkargief), verw. 1/5: Kerraadnotule, 24.9.1932.

³⁷ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (Geref-Kerkargief), verw. 1/4: Kerraadnotule, 3.7.1908.

³⁸ J.L. Cachet (red.), *Almanak voor de Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika*, 30, 1904, p.53. Kyk ook N.H. van der Walt (red.), *Almanak van die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika* 64, 1939, p.71.

³⁹ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (Geref-Kerkargief), verw. 1/4: Kerraadnotule, 2.7.1909 en Kerraadnotule 23.3.1917.

1927. Schutte proposed that men and women should not sit together during worship services – as had been customary in the early church. This proposal was accepted by the church council.⁴⁰

It would seem that the number of the Gereformeerde members of the Gatsrand had increased to such an extent by 1930, that the two wards of the congregation justified a second deacon and elder.⁴¹ Wards were consequently also started at Losberg, Rooipoort and Klipdrift.⁴² At this stage, one service was conducted at the various places per term.⁴³ Expansion at the gold mines would give rise to the founding of an own congregation at Gatsrand only in 1949. The new Gereformeerde congregation was called Buffeldoorns, because some of the very first members of the church at Potchefstroom were inhabitants of the farm Buffelsdoorn.⁴⁴

3.2 The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NH Church)

The NH congregation Losberg at Fochville branched out from the mother church at Potchefstroom. New congregational boundaries were drawn and all the members of the Hervormde Kerk in the Gatsrand were included within the new congregational borders.⁴⁵

A total of 767 members were included in the congregation – 444 communicant and 232 baptised members. Since the founding of the congregation, it took more than four years before the first minister of religion, candidate for the ministry PJ Smit, was installed. At that stage, the communicant members had already increased by 26 and the baptised members by 129. The growth can possibly be ascribed to some members initially being reluctant to join the new congregation and their changing their minds in the course of time.⁴⁶

Morning services were held on the first three Sundays of every month at Wonderfontein, Herminaskool (Rietfontein number 659), Japiesrus (Leeuwpoot school), Kaalplaas, Rhenosterfontein and Modderfontein. From June 1939, a regular worship service was also held at the mining town Blyvooruitzicht.⁴⁷

⁴⁰ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (Geref-Kerkargief), verw. 1/5: Kerraadnotule, 12.2.1927.

⁴¹ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (Geref-Kerkargief), verw. 1/5: Kerraadnotule, 20.6.1930

⁴² Potchefstroom-Gemeente (Geref-Kerkargief), verw. 1/5: Kerraadnotule, 24.9.1932

⁴³ Potchefstroom-Gemeente (Geref-Kerkargief), verw. 1/5: Kerraadnotule, 31.3.1933

⁴⁴ B.J.V. Naudé (red.) *Gedenkuitgawe: Ontvangs van poskoets te Oberholzer, 9-11 Februarie 1952*, p.51

⁴⁵ Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg - feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, p.6.

⁴⁶ S.P. Engelbrecht (red.), *Almanak en Bybelse dagboek van die Nederduitsch Herormde Kerk van Afrika*, 42, 1926, p.65. Kyk ook *Almanak en Bybelse dagboek...*, 46, 1930, p.61.

⁴⁷ Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg - feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, pp.3, 10.

Members of the congregation living outside the borders of Fochville, such as JB Wolmarans, FPR Schutte, J Martins, AL Oosthuizen and JP Pretorius were members of the building committee who had managed the finances and planning of an own church building. However, the severe drought and depression (1929-1933) already affected the congregational life in the early 1930s. The building of a church building consequently had to be postponed for the time being.⁴⁸

The reverend Smit turned his attention to the children's catechism, which had already been the responsibility of the congregation's catechism commission since 1927. A milestone in church activities was the founding of the "Jongelingsvereniging" (Youth Society) in June 1934.⁴⁹

By 1935, the NH congregation Losberg at Fochville consisted of 585 communicant and 445 baptised members⁵⁰. In 1938, one year after the inauguration of the new church building, Reverend Smit left the congregation. The relieving minister, JGM Dreyer of Potchefstroom (ex-inhabitant of the farm Leeuwpoort in the Gatsrand), took all religious activities upon himself.⁵¹

An increase in mining activities in the northern parts of Gatsrand caused the growth of inhabitant numbers in that area. This implied that the congregation would either have to extend the number of services held in the district or consider secession. In 1939, attention was given to the possible secession of a congregation at Bank. There were also negotiations with the NH congregation Krugersdorp.⁵² The start of the Second World War in 1939 may possibly have been the reason that nothing happened regarding secession at this stage.

In 1942, Elder W van der Merwe of Leeuwpoort again drew the attention of the church council to the secession issue. It was approved and was referred to the presbyterial executive of Zeerust, which also reacted positively in response to the idea. On 7 September 1946, an NH congregation was established for Bank in the school hall of Rooipoort with 250 communicant and 130 baptised members. Reverend P Geertsema was the congregation's

⁴⁸ Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg - feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, pp.10, 16.

⁴⁹ Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg - feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, pp.7, 10, 13.

⁵⁰ S.P. Engelbrecht (red.), *Almanak en Bybelse dagboek van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* 29, 1935 p.73.

⁵¹ Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg-feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, p.15.

⁵² Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg-feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, p.15.

first minister. The wards of the new congregation were composed mainly from out of the congregations Losberg and Randpoort.⁵³

Prior to the secession of the new congregation Bank, a branch of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Sisters' Society was founded at Doornfontein on 5 April 1942. The purpose of this branch was to raise funds for congregational interests such as the building of a church hall, as well as general issues such as orphanages and theological training. Women tried to raise funds for this purpose in each and every ward of the NH congregation Losberg.⁵⁴

Every sub-branch also saw to the needs of the poor in their own ward.⁵⁵ With the secession of the Bank congregation in 1946, mention was made in a financial report by the chairperson of the Losberg branch of the Women's Association of the loss of two industrious sub-branches – probably Bank and Leeuwpoot.⁵⁶

By 1948, the number of members of the NH congregation Losberg was as follows: 566 communicant and 396 baptised members. The decrease of 172 members could be largely attributed to the secession of the daughter congregation at Bank.⁵⁷ The phenomenal growth of the Bank congregation gave rise to the founding of the NH congregation at Carletonville.⁵⁸

3.3 The Dutch Reformed Church (DR Church) ("Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk")

With the founding of the NH congregation at Losberg in 1925, it was feared that some DR members might attend services of the Hervormde congregation and would become members of the Hervormde Church. The congregations at Potchefstroom were requested to consider the founding of a Dutch Reformed congregation at Fochville. The DR congregation was founded in cooperation with the congregations Potchefstroom, Mooi River and Vereeniging on 11 April 1935.⁵⁹ At secession, the total number of souls counted 690, while their neighbours, the NH congregation, at that stage already had 1 030.⁶⁰

⁵³ P.S. Dreyer (red.), *Almanak en Bybelse dagboek van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* 40, 1946, p.160. Vergelyk ook Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg - feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, p.16.

⁵⁴ Volkswelsyn en pensioene (SAB), verw. 2872 nr. SWP 8/777: Kontrolely, 27.5.1942. Kyk ook kontrolely 8.5.1943.

⁵⁵ Volkswelsyn en pensioene (SAB), verw. 2872 nr. SWP 8/777: L. Steyn/Sekretaris, departement Volkswelsyn, -14.8.1946.

⁵⁶ Volkswelsyn en Pensioene (SAB), verw. 2872 nr. SWP 8/777: Finansiële verslag, 31.12.1946,

⁵⁷ P. S. Dreyer (red.), *Almanak en Bybelse dagboek van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* 42, 1948, p.78.

⁵⁸ Anon., *Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente Losberg-feesuitgawe, 1925-1975*, p.16.

⁵⁹ Anon., *Halfeeufees NG Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, p.8.

⁶⁰ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), *Kerkraadsnotule*, 11.4.1935.

The DR congregation Losberg was divided into seven wards, namely Jachtfontein, Kaalfontein, Losberg, Kaalplaats, Elandsfontein number 289, Kraalkop and Droogeheuwel. Each ward consisted of three to six farms.⁶¹ However, the division of the area into congregational wards was not popular with everyone. Some did not want to leave their existing congregations and were supported by the relevant congregations. Initially only 40 of the 200 members of the Mooi River congregation within the boundaries of the Losberg congregation were willing to align with the new congregation.⁶² It was especially older members who chose not to join the new congregation, while their children were willing to do so. The main reason that caused the unfortunate situation was that the Mooi River congregation, according to the decision of the synod of 1917, upheld their right to exist without any congregational boundaries. The members were therefore not obliged to actually join the new congregation.⁶³ In 1946, the church council of the DR congregation Losberg once again negotiated with the relevant members of Mooi River congregation. However, their attempt at persuasion was unsuccessful.⁶⁴ The problem persisted until 1948.⁶⁵

After the division into wards in 1935, G Nel, the candidate for the ministry, was ordained as minister of religion of the Losberg congregation in October. During visits in the wards, he also held regular worship services. The church building at Jachtfontein was also used for this purpose.⁶⁶ In 1935, eight children were christened, while eleven were confirmed as church members and one couple was married. Each of the seven wards in the congregation had a Sunday school that was managed either by one or by two persons in a ward. There were altogether 119 children in the seven Sunday schools.⁶⁷

Youth societies of the DR congregation Losberg that were already functioning in 1945 were the Children Circle ("Kinderkrans"), the Christian Young People Society and the Christian Endeavour Society.⁶⁸ At this stage, a branch of the Transvaal Women's Mission Society (TWMS), the Men's Mission Society (MMS) and a Missionary Work Circle were also active in the area.⁶⁹

⁶¹ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), Kerkraadsnotule, 2.11.1935.

⁶² Anon., *Halfeeufees NG Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, pp.8-9. Vergelyk ook H.R.B. (pseud.), "Moorivier (Potchefstroom)", *Die Kerkbode*, xxxv 21, 22.5.1935, p.26.

⁶³ Anon., *Halfeeufees NG Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, p.17.

⁶⁴ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), Kerkraadsnotule, 9.11.1946.

⁶⁵ Anon., *Halfeeufees NG Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, p.24.

⁶⁶ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), Kerkraadnotule, 2.11.1935.

⁶⁷ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), Kerkraadnotule, 8.11.1936.

⁶⁸ Anon., *Halfeeufees NG Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, p.64.

⁶⁹ Sendingwerk word verder aan in hierdie hoofstuk behandel.

After the founding of the DR congregation at Venterspost outside the Gatsrand in 1946, the membership numbers of the Losberg congregation were decreased. At secession Rooipoort, Blyvooruitzicht, Welverdiend, Wonderfontein and Bank fell within the boundaries of the new congregation.⁷⁰ Owing to this, the total number of members of the DR congregation Losberg, which in 1946 had a number of souls of 1 342, decreased to 1 050 in 1947.⁷¹

The growing number of inhabitants of the northern parts of the Gatsrand (due to goldmine activities) created the need for the founding of yet another congregation. On 27 November 1948, the DR congregation Oberholzer seceded from the mother congregation Losberg and the congregation Venterspost with a membership of 600. Reverend PL Erasmus was the first minister. Worship services were held in the new school building, as well as in the recreational hall of the Blyvooruitzicht mine.⁷²

In spite of the loss of members to the congregations Venterspost and Oberholzer, the DR congregation Losberg with its 593 communicant and 440 baptised members remained one of the biggest of all the congregations (NH congregations excluded) in the Gatsrand by 1948.⁷³

3.4 Other dominations

The inhabitants of Gatsrand were not only Afrikaans speakers and descendants of the Voortrekkers. A considerable number of English speakers and members of other races lived in the area – especially by the end of the thirties of the twentieth century when gold was discovered.⁷⁴

In response to a request by the English-speaking officials of the gold mines in Gatsrand, a minister of the Wesleyan/Methodist Church, Reverend J Cox, held worship services in the recreational hall at Blyvooruitzicht for white and black mineworkers every fifth Sunday from 1942.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Anon., *Halfeeufees NG Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, p.35.

⁷¹ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), *Kerkraadnotule*, 22.3.1947.

⁷² NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), *Kerkraadnotule*, 28.10.1948. Vergelyk ook W. Hagan-Watson, "Down memory lane...", p.52.

⁷³ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), *Kerkraadnotule*, 27.3.1949.

⁷⁴ Vergelyk voetnote 75-82 en 83-104.

⁷⁵ B.J.V. Naudé (red.), *Gedenkuitgawe: Ontvangs van poskoets te Oberholzer, 9-11 Februarie 1952*, p.11.

The number of English speakers increased to such an extent that one service per month was soon inadequate. Ministers that were active in the area of Ventersdorp and Randfontein were unable to hold more than one service for the mineworkers owing to other local commitments. In 1948, Reverend DC Thompson, superintendent of the West Rand Circle, was approached with a petition in which more services at Blyvooruitzicht were requested. Reverend Thompson, in collaboration with the spiritual workers of the circle, decided that one service per month would be held starting October. Mine officials nevertheless started to raise funds for a minister of their own. In 1949, Reverend CGS Spencer accepted the call as minister for the gold mines in the Gatsrand.⁷⁶ At that stage, there were 80 souls and one Hobson and a Mrs Ackermann were responsible for the Sunday school classes.⁷⁷

The first worship service of the Anglican Church (Church of the Province of South Africa) was held in the recreational hall of Blyvooruitzicht by Father CJC Cutter in 1940. The need was so great that it was decided to have monthly worship services. From 1945, services were conducted by Fathers ES Muller and HR Higgs.⁷⁸ In 1948, the church was given permission by the Executive Council to build both a church and a parsonage.⁷⁹

Although a Jewish congregation for the Carletonville area – the Carletonville and District Hebrew Congregation was founded only in August 1951, with T Waks as chairman) – services were already held in private homes prior to 1948. Jews like the Rosenths, Fleischers and Woolfsons, who had been in the Gatsrand from about 1893, probably also practised their religious activities in this way owing to their being spread over the area.⁸⁰ At that stage, the closest synagogues were those of Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand.⁸¹

In the thirties, a few Indians settled in especially the northern area for the purpose of trading. Like the Jewish families, they practised their religion in private homes. A Muslim priest often conducted worship services for Indian families at the house of I Nosarka at Bank. On this occasion children were given religious instruction by the priest. An Indian mosque, known as the *Bank and district Moslem Masjid*, was founded at Bank only in the fifties.⁸²

⁷⁶ W. Hagan-Watson, "Down memory lane...", p.52.

⁷⁷ B.J.V. Naudé (red.), *Gedenkuitgawe: Ontvangs van poskoets te Oberholzer, 9-11 Februarie 1952*, p. 13. Vergelyk ook W. Hagan-Watson, "Down memory lane...", p.52.

⁷⁸ B.J.V. Naudé (red.), *Gedenkuitgawe: Ontvangs van poskoets te Oberholzer, 9-11 Februarie 1952*, p.21.

⁷⁹ Uitvoerende Raad van die Unie (SAB), verw. 2553 nr. 3441:Toestemming aan Johannesburg Diocesan Trustees, 18.10.1948.

⁸⁰ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Onderhoud T. Waks, 15.4.1987. Vergelyk ook B.J.V. Naudé (red.), *Gedenkuitgawe: Ontvangs van poskoets te Oberholzer, 9-11 Februarie 1952*, pp.17, 19.

⁸¹ G. Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African experience, 1910-1956*, pp.22, 65.

⁸² Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Onderhoud T. Nosarka, 27.5.1987.

3.5 Missionary work

As far as is known, it was only the Berlin Missionary Society and the Reformed Church that had already started with missionary work in the Gatsrand by the sixties of the nineteenth century, even though the activities of the Reformed Church are not quite clear in this regard.

PJW Schutte of Buffelsdoorn and an elder of the Reformed congregation of Potchefstroom had already mentioned in 1863 to Reverend S Hofmeyer that missionary work ought to be done amongst the "heathen".⁸³ During the reverend's brief stay with Schutte, he probably held worship services for black labourers of the farm and surrounds. It is also possible that Schutte regularly taught them from the Bible.

By 1879, the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) congregation at Potchefstroom already consisted of approximately 97 persons, most of which were black labourers of the town. Reverend B Köhler who was serving here, worked for the cause of starting outposts where an evangelist could deal with missionary work. Two such outposts that were established, namely Gatsrand and Losberg, were apparently so enthusiastic that it caused Köhler great joy. A school building was, for instance, built at Losberg and, by 1899, members of the congregation contributed one shilling per month to help with the expansion of the congregation.⁸⁴

The Anglican Church, which commenced with missionary work at Potchefstroom after the Anglo-Boer War of 1880-1881, caused problems for the BMS. Apart from missionary ministering in the town, Anglican evangelists also travelled around the district and even convinced BMS members to join their church. In 1888, the Berlin evangelist at Losberg, for instance, joined the Anglican Church.⁸⁵

In the nineteenth century, missionary work was done predominantly by English-speaking churches. Boers, on the other hand, displayed a negative attitude with regard to missionary work.⁸⁶ It is known that some believed that the natives of Africa were descendants of Ham

⁸³ S. Hofmeyer, *Twintig jaar in Zoutpansberg: Een verhaal van twintig jaren arbeid onder Heidenen in de Transvaal*, p.89.

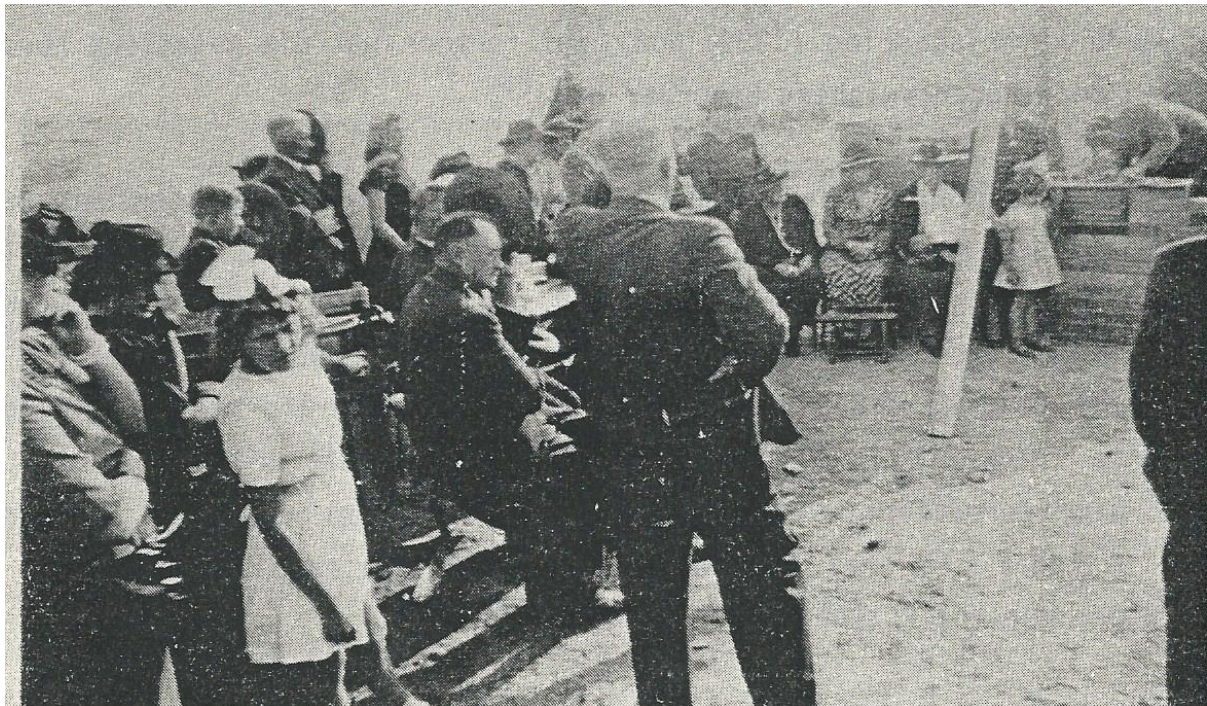
⁸⁴ D.W. van der Merwe, "Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal, 1860-1900", *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 46(1), 1984, p.96.

⁸⁵ D.W. van der Merwe, "Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal, 1860-1900", *Argiefjaarboek van Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 46(1), 1984, p.96.

⁸⁶ J.W. Kok, *Sonderlinge vrug*, p.20.

(Genesis 9:25).⁸⁷ This Scripturally-based racism actually permeated the domain of defence. The regular wars against black tribes and the use that the British made of blacks against whites during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) were factors that promoted the negative attitude towards missionary activities.⁸⁸

Apart from ministers of religion, only a few from the farming community regarded themselves as having been called to minister to the spiritual needs of the "heathen". DP Terburg, who started teaching at Gatsrand in 1894, cherished the ideal of doing missionary work among the blacks.⁸⁹ In 1895, he founded the Nederduitsch Hervormde (or Gereformeerde Zending [Missionary] Congregation Transvaal at Potchefstroom.⁹⁰ He left the teaching profession to act as missionary minister for the district of Potchefstroom. Apparently, worship services were not held everywhere in the district so that those wishing to attend had to travel to Potchefstroom.⁹¹



LAYING THE CORNERSTONE OF THE MISSION CHURCH AT FOCHVILLE, 1948
Photo: Nederduitse Gereformeerde Congregation, Losberg (Fochville)

The Anglo-Boer War caused missionary activities to grind to a halt. These were to resume only after the declaration of peace. On 15 November 1905, women of the Dutch Reformed

⁸⁷ G.C.P. van der Vyver, *Professor Dirk Postma, 1818-1890*, p.411.

⁸⁸ J.W. Kok, *Sonderlinge vrug*, p.20.

⁸⁹ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname J.M.F. Terburg, 30.9.1987.

⁹⁰ C. Spoelstra, *Het kerkelijk en goedsdienstig leven der Boeren na den Grooten Trek*, p.604.

⁹¹ Carletonville (PU vir CHO), verw. 3: Bandopname J.M.F. Terburg, 30.9.1987.

Church started the Transvaal Women's Mission Society (TWMS) in Pretoria.⁹² Branches of the society were established all over the Transvaal, having in mind to focus on missionary work and poor relief. In 1933, 15 sisters of the DR congregation Losberg founded a branch with Mrs J Freislich as chairperson.⁹³

The first missions bazaar of the TWMS branch at Losberg was held on 24 October 1936 and the proceeds were used for local missionary work. An evangelist was also appointed for mine workers in the northern parts of Gatsrand.⁹⁴ Another society of the DR Church, the Men's Mission Society (MMS), which was established in 1917, also opened a branch at Losberg in 1938. HA Muller was the first chairperson.⁹⁵ According to the 1947-1948 financial statement of the branch, money was donated to indigent organisations outside Gatsrand for missionary work.⁹⁶

In April 1941, the branches of the MMS and the Transvaal Women's Mission Society (TWMS) at Losberg met for the purpose of addressing the founding of a local missionary congregation. Money to build a house for an evangelist was handed to the church council in 1944. They also undertook to contribute £30 annually with regard to the person's salary.⁹⁷ In 1945, the TWMS and the MMS, in cooperation with the church council, ordained evangelist Leslie Matsoele at Fochville. The mission church of the Losberg congregation was inaugurated on 25 June 1949.⁹⁸ Missionary services were also held in the second township of the Blyvooruitzicht mine, "The Hill".⁹⁹

A missionary work circle of the DR Church was established in Fochville in 1939. The work circle tried to support missionary work both inside and outside Gatsrand. The local TWMS and MMS branches were also supported financially by the Missionary Work Circle.¹⁰⁰

At the start of mining activities at Blyvooruitzicht in 1937, the Anglican Church started with missionary work among the black mineworkers. Worship services were held in the mine's

⁹² J.W. Kok, *Sonderlinge vrug*, pp.22, 30-32. Vergelyk ook D.W. van der Merwe "Die geskiedenis van die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in Transvaal, 1860-1900." *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 46(1), 1984, p.96.

⁹³ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), Transvaalse Vrouesendingvereniging: Notule, Oktober 1933.

⁹⁴ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), Transvaalse Vrouesendingvereniging: Finansiële state, 5.11.1935-30.6.1949.

⁹⁵ Anon., *Halfeeufees NG Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, p.49. Vergelyk ook J.W. Kok, *Sonderlinge vrug*, p.40.

⁹⁶ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), Mannesendingbond: Finansiële state vir 1947-1948.

⁹⁷ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), Transvaalse Vrouesendingvereniging: Notules, 26.4.1941 en 5.8.1944.

⁹⁸ Anon., *Halfeeufees NG Kerk Losberg, 1935-1985*, pp.48-49.

⁹⁹ W. Hagan-Watson, "Down memory lane...", p.52.

¹⁰⁰ NG-Gemeente Losberg (Fochville), Sendingwerkkring: Finansiële verslag vir 1.7.1947-30.6.1948. Vergelyk ook Kerkraadnotule, 15.4.1939.

first residential area, "The Village", but the frequency of these is uncertain.¹⁰¹ In 1948, permission was granted by the Executive Council to use a piece of land at Blyvooruitzicht to build a church building and parsonage for blacks.¹⁰² The Roman Catholic Church was also granted permission to start building a parsonage and church building for blacks at Blyvooruitzicht.¹⁰³ In 1949, the Methodist Church applied for similar permission.¹⁰⁴

It is conspicuous that only English churches were established as close as possible to the Blyvooruitzicht mine in order to minister to black mine workers. On the other hand, the Afrikaans churches preferred to conduct their missionary work from outside Blyvooruitzicht and to then have worship services there according to fixed arrangements.

¹⁰¹ W. Hagan-Watson, "Down memory lane...", p.52.

¹⁰² Uitvoerende Raad van die Unie (SAB), verw. 2535 nr, 2676: Toestemming aan Johannesburg Diocesan Trustees (Anglican Church), 9.6.1948.

¹⁰³ Uitvoerende Raad van die Unie (SAB), verw. 2535 nr. 2700: Toestemming aan Transvaal Vikariaat, 18.7.1948

¹⁰⁴ Uitvoerende Raad van die Unie (SAB), verw. 2662 nr. 2628: Toestemming aan Methodist Church of South Africa, 7.5.1949.