

Second International Conference on Protestant Church Polity: Good Governance in Church and Society today

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The Department for Church History and Church Polity of the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria organized a second conference on Church Polity in collaboration with VU University Amsterdam. Aimed mainly but not exclusively at protestant theologians, the conference has dealt with issues related to the responsibilities of churches for good governance in order to properly respond to their mission for their own members as well as for society. The key question has been: to what extent is it possible to speak of “*Good governance in church and society today*” within the framework of church polity? This question is an invitation to reflect on two main areas of research. The first area concerns *internal* church life. Ecumenism shows that it is ready, at least in some settings, to concede or change historically grown patterns and definitions. But no confessional tradition can afford to neglect similar challenges. Some Christian traditions, such as the Reformed, seems able to easily integrate modern good governance values, whilst other churches and traditions do not consider it necessary to operate such updates. The second area of concern is *external* relations of churches, and more particularly; church – state relationships. Should churches be the champions of good governance in society? How do they, and how should they see their responsibilities in this regard? Starting from this problematic, the keynote presenters were invited to reflect upon, from their different perspectives: How can church polity contribute to good governance in church and society in the 21st century?

Eighteen papers were presented during this conference. Most of them were presented by South African participants; however, a good number of presenters came from abroad: Holland, Sweden, Philippines, Zimbabwe and Switzerland. The list of titles presented gives an idea of the diversity of themes presented: Leo Koffeman, *Accountability and church discipline: an inconvenient relationship*; Christina Landman, *Good governance and discipline: Incorporating a mediation process into the Church Order*; Anna Tronet, *Good governance*

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