

PROPOSITION FOR THE ASPECTS AND PROCESS OF REFORMED SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Background

In order to assist the work of the church, the Synod of RCH determined the conduction of a sociological research as a key objective, in the „cycle plan” for the period of 2009-14. Through the description and interpretation of the condition of church and society, such research could influence the direction and emphasis, and thus enhance the service of the church. The Church Vision Committe confirmed this ruling of the Synod, moreover, established it as a decisive condition of operation.

To systematize and assess the data available within the church, and to concretize demands for research in various fields of service, in 2010 the Presidency of the Synod set up a Committee of experts named by the four church districts. *Members of the Committee are: Sándor Gaál; Gábor Kovács; Mihály Márkus; Ilona Tókécz.* Due to insufficient administration, however, the operation of the Committee was broken off after a few meetings. The proposition below is partly meant to revive the reflection, initiated by the operation of the Committee.

In accordance with the resolution of the Synod, along with its repeatedly confirmed intention, we propose that in 2013, based on the aspects below, RCH aggregate data at their disposal and launch a direct sociological study. The proposition was supported by the Presidential Council of the Synod.

Objectives of the research

- a. description of the present situation of the church
- b. description of the social setting surrounding the church
- c. specifying the aim and direction of mission
- d. preparing thematic strategies

Issues concerning us

- a. map of the reformed faith – where applicable, comparison with earlier data, in order to find information on changes and trends
- b. comparison of denominational and economic data, drawing possible consequences at regional level
- c. distribution of age of church members
- d. ratio of pastors and those „being pastored” in regional/church district breakdown

Utilization of the national census data

The fact that the procession of the data from last year’s census is expected in the near future also contributes to the timeliness of the research. It will provide us with a picture of the location and the circumstances among which members of our church live throughout the country. The census mostly gathered data concerning economic and household issues. This dimension is easy to elaborate. The same applies to the agegroups.

Processing the data

- a. Analysis of the 2011 census data processed by spring 2013, from a reformed point of view
- b. Comparison of the 2011 census data with those from 1949 and 2001. Data from 1949 possibly requires data input. This would make the preparation of a „map of the reformed faith” possible. A software is available.

The census does not provide us with data on the number of those who regularly attend church and actively participate in congregation, a different solution needs to be found.

- a. Online questionnaire for congregations (filled by pastors and church wardens). We contact every congregation and ask them to fill in the questionnaire, prepared specifically for this purpose (paper and/or online format). If we opt for this, our tasks are the following:
 - i. creating the questionnaire
 - ii. having the questionnaires filled
 - iii. processing the data
- b. Settlement investigation (thorough investigation of 12 reformed settlements). If we opt for this solution, we should choose some typical settlements in every church district, where we can conduct a more thorough research. In reformed villages we ask not only the regular church-goers about why they regularly attend church, but also those who do not attend church – what their reason is, and what would make them go to church. In this case, our tasks are the following:
 - i. developing a methodology for research
 - ii. choosing the settlements
 - iii. organizing research groups (students of sociology, communication and social work at Károli Gáspár University of RCH, under the supervision of professors)
 - iv. field-work
 - v. procession of data

Actual steps

- a. Confirmation, and if needed, extension of the present Committee. This body is to tend to and co-ordinate the work, in which experts and co-workers may be involved.
- b. Ensuring the necessary financial resources (ca. 2 million HUF)
- c. Gathering and processing available information concerning the census (1949, 2001) – at some places, this has already been done.
- d. Preparing questionnaires, under the supervision of the Committee.
- e. Conducting a questionnaire-assisted research in the congregations in spring 2013.
- f. After processing the census and congregation data, visiting the selected settlements in summer/autumn 2013.

- g. We rely on the Institute of Sociology of Károli Gáspár University of RCH for administrative support.

Based on propositions of Church Research Committee, Church Vision Committee, Dr Márton Csanády, and heads of department at the Synod Office, compiled by Zoltán Tarr, Synod councillor

MOTION FOR RESOLUTION

- 1. The Synod supports the 2013 launch of sociological research, in accordance with the objectives of the proposition,**
- 2. The Synod calls upon the church bodies to make the required data and information available to the research,**
- 3. The Synod calls upon the Church Research Ad hoc Committee, in accordance with the objectives of the proposition, to draft the practical steps to be taken, including the expected cost, and involve experts of the field,**
- 4. The Synod calls upon the Károli Gáspár University of the RCH to assist in realizing the intended sociological research,**
- 5. The Synod calls upon the Council of the Synod to consider the financing of researchers when planning the budget of 2013.**