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Sent: 29 August 2006 10:44 AM
To: Smit, DJ, Prof <djs1@sun.ac.za>
Subject: bericht van overlijden

Voor Dirkie en Ria Smit-Jonker,

Beste mensen,

Via Daan Cloete kregen we het bericht dat jullie vader en schoonvader, Willie Jonker, is overleden. Wij wisten dat zijn gezondheid lichamelijk en geestelijk achteruit ging, maar met een overlijdensbericht wordt het afscheid definitief. Voor jullie een groot verlies en verdriet, nu het afscheid gekomen is. Lientje en ik willen graag ons meeleven kenbaar maken en jullie kracht toewensen om dit verdriet een plaats te geven. Mogen jullie je daarbij getroost weten door het evangelie dat hij in zijn leven en werk heeft mogen verkondigen. Persoonlijk denk ik dankbaar terug aan de korte periode dat ik in Kampen onder zijn leiding mocht werken. Zijn wijze van theologiseren heeft op mij en veel anderen grote indruk gemaakt. Zijn naam is daardoor onuitwisbaar verbonden met die van de Gereformeerde Kerken (thans de PKN) in Nederland. De maand november hopen wij in Stellenbosch door te brengen. Mogelijk is er dan een gelegenheid elkaar persoonlijk te ontmoeten. Hartelijke groet van ons beiden, Lientje en Gerben Heitink

OBITUARIES IN BRIEF

● WILLIE Jonker, who has died in the Strand at the age of 77, was a Dutch Reformed Church dominee and prominent theologian who incurred the wrath of his church for his opposition to apartheid.

At a church conference in Rustenburg in 1990 Jonker stood up and apologised on behalf of the DRC for apartheid.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu accepted his apology, but both men were roundly criticised by delegates of the "black" sister churches of the "white" DRC, who believed that the apology was a cop-out. The "white" DRC said Jonker had no right to apologise on its behalf, although in the face of strong support for Jonker in the Afrikaans press it subsequently retracted its statement position.

It was ironic that Jonker should have been the one to apologise, because he had spent his whole life preaching that the DRC should be a single, undivided church for all believers regardless of race or colour. There was no theological justification for apartheid in the church, he believed, and equally no theological justification for apartheid outside the church.

In 1960 he refused an invitation to join the Broederbond, saying that he could not belong to an organisation that demanded higher allegiance to itself than to God.

Although he was never formally expelled from the church like his good friend Beyers Naudé, who married him and his wife Bettie, life was made so difficult and unpleasant for him that he left the pulpit and became an academic. He published 13 books on theology, contributed to numerous scholarly journals and was regarded as one of South Africa's leading theologians.

Jonker was born on March 1 1929 on a farm in the Lichtenburg district in North West. His father was a tenant farmer. After matriculating he read theology at the University of Pretoria and was ordained in 1955.

He was ostracised within the church for his views. Congregations reported him to the church council and invitations to preach at other churches were withdrawn. This rejection by the church he loved depressed him deeply and in 1968 he accepted a professorship at the Theological University of Kampen in Holland.

In 1971 he returned to South Africa and became professor of theology at the University of Stellenbosch, where his views continued to get him into trouble. There were threatening and abusive phone calls and after shots were fired at his house he employed a guard to protect his family. He retired in 1993.

Jonker is survived by his wife and four children. — *Chris Barron*