

# The reception of Polygamy by Afrikaans readers

**Author:**Christina Landman<sup>1</sup> **Affiliation:**

<sup>1</sup>College of Human Sciences,  
Research Institute for  
Theology and Religion,  
University of South Africa,  
Pretoria, South Africa

**Corresponding author:**

Christina Landman,  
christina.landman2@gmail.  
com

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On 14 January 1999, the woman theologian Christina Landman published an article in the religious column, *Godsdien Aktueel*, of the Afrikaans daily newspaper *Beeld* under the heading 'Poligamie, ditsem!' (Yes, for polygamy!). In the article, Landman pondered whether polygamy – which is allowed in South Africa for indigenous cultures – would not be an advantage for the Afrikaans society where extra-marital affairs were allegedly high. There was an immediate and long-running reaction to this article in the Afrikaans, as well as in the English media, nationally and internationally, in the printed media, as well as on radio and television. This article will isolate themes in the responding letters of Afrikaans readers. The rejection of polygamy by Afrikaans readers rests on arguments that it is unbiblical, dehumanising to women and impractical. On the other hand, those Afrikaans readers who opt for polygamy argue that multiple-partner-relationships can save marriages from ending in divorce because of extra-marital affairs and can lighten the burden on overworked women.

**Contribution:** This article contributes to the debate on polygamy and in particular from the Afrikaans population in South Africa whose culture and religion forbid polygamy. The discussion and findings as thematised in this article contribute to a body of knowledge not been dealt with in academic research.

**Keywords:** polygamy; Afrikaans newspapers, Afrikaans readers; Christina Landman; marriage in South Africa.

## Introduction

### Background

From 03 December to 14 December 1998, the 8th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) took place in Harare, Zimbabwe. Christina Landman attended this meeting as a Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians member. She was not representing a church since, at this stage, she was not yet ordained as a minister of the Word. She was teaching Church History at the University of South Africa in Pretoria, South Africa, and had obtained a DTh (Doctor Theologiae) and post-graduate degrees in classical Latin and Greek. In 1990, she became the first South African-born woman to become a Professor in theology at a South African university. In South Africa and among Afrikaans whites, she was known and feared as a 'feminist', a title she rejected, calling herself an African woman theologian. Although she was one of only two white women – the other being Denise Ackermann – to be allowed as members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians until 2013, she was representing them at the said WCC meeting in 1998.

At this WCC meeting in Harare, there were African churches of which the leadership was polygamous that applied for membership. The WCC was hesitant to reply to their request although they have indeed been trying to deal with the issue of polygamy for almost four decades. Birgitta Larsson, a member of the WCC central committee, outlines this history in 'A quest for clarity: The World Council of Churches and human sexuality', which was published in 1998 just before the Harare assembly. Larsson (1998:30) points out that polygamy was on the agenda at the third WCC General Assembly in New Delhi (1961), albeit among other 'sins'. She quotes from a New Delhi WCC decision: 'The churches have to discover what positions and action to take in regard to: sex relations before and after marriage; illegitimacy; in some cultures, polygamy or concubinage as a social system sanctioned by law and custom; in some Western cultures short-term marriages, or liaisons, easy divorce ...' (Larsson 1998:30). Larsson points out that neither the 4th WCC assembly in Uppsala (1968) nor the 5th in Nairobi (1975), the 6th in Vancouver (1983) or the 7th in Canberra (1991) addressed the 'issue' of polygamy comprehensively, if at all. When it came on the table of the said 8th WCC assembly in Harare, a Reference Group on Human Sexuality was formed with one of its terms of reference 'to ensure the participation of representatives from WCC member churches in their confessional, cultural and religious diversity'. Following Harare and in

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preparation for the 9th General Assembly of the WCC to be held in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in 2006, a Background Document was circulated to member churches under the title 'Churches' response to human sexuality', which again only nominally referred to polygamy, though in less derogatory terms.

The WCC clearly did not want to prescribe to their member churches in their cultural variety of how human sexuality should be seen, and this document is concluded with the following decisions:

Three insights seem to be central throughout the journey of the WCC's response to issues of human sexuality:

- to concentrate on the mainstreaming of positions and the production of authoritative statements is obviously counterproductive and deepens the rifts within and among churches; there is a need for ecumenical spaces for encounter, analysis, dialogue and education following an enabling and pastoral approach to the issues at stake;
- to neglect the diversity of contexts and the different issues that are of concern for the churches in different regions is not helpful, the recommendation of the Harare Programme Guidelines Committee to move from sexual orientation to human sexuality in its rich diversity provided useful guidance;
- the entry point should always be the celebration of the gift of life and human bodies instead of a narrow focus on normative and prescriptive guidelines (WCC *Churches' response to human sexuality* 2006:26).

In this context, Landman published her article on polygamy at the beginning of 1999 (14 January), in which her multi-cultural exposure clashed with the white readership of *Beeld* and other Afrikaans newspapers.

## Aim

This article aims to thematise the responses of Afrikaans readers to an article, 'Poligamie, ditsem!' (Yes, for polygamy) published by Christina Landman in the daily newspaper *Beeld* on 14 January 1999, in which she asked whether polygamy was a solution to the presupposed high occurrence of marital problems among white Afrikaans-speaking people in South Africa.

## Data collection

The data for this article are letters and articles published in Afrikaans newspapers and magazines following Landman's publication of the said article on polygamy. Reference will also be made to interviews with Landman published in the Afrikaans media, as well as radio and television appearances. The printed material has been collected from Landman's private collection.

## Interpretation and ethical clearance

The responses to Landman's article on polygamy are letters published and material that form part of the public domain,

for which ethical clearance is not necessary. The reader responses will not be interpreted in terms of underlying agendas but will be arranged under themes provided by the responses themselves. In short, the responses will be given through unmediated, that is, without them being mediated by the interpretation of the author of this article.

## Literary review and unique contribution

Various academic articles have been published on polygamy in South Africa by law experts, historians, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists and others during the past two decades after – but not necessarily because of – Landman's article on polygamy. Only two will be mentioned here because of their direct bearing on the themes presented by the responses to her article.

In 2009, law expert Penelope Andrews published 'Who's afraid of polygamy? Exploring the boundaries of family, equality and custom in South Africa in which she asked whether polygamy — even though the objectives of the *Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (120 of 1998)* is to protect cultural rights, diversity and the rights of women in polygamous marriages — is this not in conflict with gender equality?' Although Landman emphasised that polygamy is meant as a recycled relationship of equality between all the role-players involved, this may be a strong theme in the responses, namely that Landman could not be a 'feminist' and recommending polygamy at the same time.

Another academic article of importance was published in 2004 (online 26 March 2009), by historians Peter Delius and Clive Glaser (2004:84–114) of the University of the Witwatersrand, under the title 'The myths of polygamy: A history of extra-marital and multi-partnership sex in South Africa'. Delius and Glaser (2004) wanted to undermine the contemporary tendency to make a close connection between polygamy and male promiscuity:

This connection has been argued in two ways. First, polygamy created an expectation of multiple sexual partnerships for men. Second, there was a tendency to romanticise African tradition by insisting that 'in the old days' polygamy successfully contained male sexual urges. In this latter formulation, western influences and urbanisation undermined polygamy, distorted homestead structures and spurred extra-marital sexuality. This article demonstrates that both approaches are simplistic. (p. 50)

Again, this may be one of the main themes ensuing from the readers' responses: polygamy is promiscuous, be it black people or white people.

A third article is important here as it specifically addresses the theological thinking of various Christian denominations in Africa. Elijah Baloyi, a professor in Missiology at the University of South Africa, published in 2013 an article 'Critical reflections on polygamy in the African Christian context' in which he wanted to 'explore and present an argument on whether polygamy can still be regarded as acceptable in contemporary Christian communities' (Baloyi

2013:1). After exploring female infertility, menopause, the prohibition of sexual intercourse during pregnancy and nursing, social exclusion, the desire for a male heir, the absence of working mothers and taking care of widows as reasons for polygamy, he concludes that Christian churches could allow polygamy, and provide a safe space for polygamists to become members, without being critical of Christian churches who disallow polygamy (Baloyi 2013:12).

It allows for the fact that polygamy is not to be a universal Christian prohibition, but that churches can decide to create a home for polygamous marriages.

Landman's contribution to the debate is the thematisation of responses from Afrikaans readers whose culture and religion forbid polygamy – a topic that has not been dealt with in academic research.

This article contributes to the debate on polygamy and in particular from the Afrikaans population in South Africa, whose culture and religion forbid polygamy. The discussion and findings as thematised in this article contribute to a body of knowledge that has not been dealt with in academic research

## Thematic analysis of reader responses 1999–2002

### Contents of the article 'Poligamie, ditsem' (Yes to polygamy)

In 1999, Landman was free to say what she wanted. She was not ordained in any church and was in a tenured position at a university with the academic freedom to explore and implode. On the one hand, she felt obliged to invite responses from an Afrikaans civil and religious society that was still very stylised in terms of race and gender. On the other hand, the article was playful, not acknowledging at that moment, that Afrikaans readers did not expect a professor in theology to be kittenish.

In light-hearted irony, the article *Poligamie, ditsem* (Yes, for polygamy) in *Beeld* (1999) asked why the law discriminates against white women. Black women can, in terms of Customary Law, decide to marry an already married man, but white women may not do that.

Landman then argues that polygamy is of necessity to: (1) women who do not want to divorce their husbands when they find out that he has a mistress; (2) women who later in life become bored with their domestic roles of caring and pleasing and would like to invite another woman into the relationship to do the chores; (3) women who could not find an unmarried husband and (4) the mistress who now can come out in the open and claim her rights. She emphasises that polygamy should be the woman's choice.

Landman then refers to the many polygamists in the Bible, such as David, Solomon and Ruth, who targeted the already

married Boas. Finally, she refers to the WCC that she has attended in December of the previous year (1998) in Harare, and the dilemma caused by their stance on monogamy when their (potential) member churches have polygamous leaderships.

The responses in terms of letters to the three Afrikaans daily newspapers, *Beeld* (in the northern provinces), *Volksblad* (in the middle of the country, Free State, etc.) and *Burger* (southern provinces, Cape, etc.) were voluminous and lasted, not for weeks, but for months.

The following themes are extracted from the letters:

#### Theme 1: The Bible is against polygamy

Dr. Breed from Bronkhorstspuit writes (*Beeld* 1999)

Diwarsdeur die Bybel word dit uitgespel dat God se wil vir die huwelik is een man en een vrou, en telkens word dit onder ons aandag gebring dat 'n afwyking daarvan moeilikheid beteken ... Landman gebruik dus die Bybel om iets te propageer waarteen God gekant is. (p. 13)

The letter writer is convinced that monogamy is God's will, and that the cases of polygamy related in the Bible had been placed there specifically to show that polygamy brings trouble.

#### Theme 2: Why should a universal rule be that all people be monogamous?

Joubert from Linden (1999) writes in *Beeld*:

*Christina Landman vat in haar rubriek aan 'n puntjie wat selde nog aangerak is in die pers en dit is Universalisme. Dit word sommer algemeen aanvaar dat daar een stel waardes in die heeal bestaan waarvolgens almal in die wêreld moet leef. Byvoorbeeld monogamie – dat dit vir alle mense regoor die wêreld die beste is.* (p. 13)

The letter writer compliments Landman for touching on a neglected issue, namely Universalism. He rejects the idea that there should be one set of values according to which the whole world must live either monogamous or polygamous.

#### Theme 3: Polygamy for whites is (il)legal

Koos Liebenberg, a reporter from the *Citizen*, a daily English newspaper in South Africa, took up the issue of polygamy, interviewed Landman and in the next two days after her article was published, wrote two articles that were published on 15 and 16 January 1999 (Liebenberg 1999a/b) – both on the front page of the *Citizen*. The heading of the first article was 'NGK prof calls for polygamy' in which Landman's article was summarised although it misrepresented Landman as a professor of the Dutch Reformed Church. The heading of the second article was Polygamy to be lawful and contained two significant interviews. The one was with Prof Roland Nhlapo of the South African Law Commission, who said that 'there is nothing to stop whites from marrying according to African custom and legally registering a polygamous marriage' (Liebenberg 1999b:1). The *Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (120 of 1998)* was promulgated the previous year. It may

be significant to quote Nhlapo's response here in full as given by Liebenberg (1999b):

Nhlapo said the constitution made it possible for any person to adopt the culture of his or her choice and race classification was a thing of the past.

However, the Bill prescribed that such a marriage should comply in every way with African custom, including the negotiations preceding the ceremony, the ritual and the celebrations afterwards.

The Home Affairs Department was in the process of drawing up the detailed regulations; it could be some time before these were completed and approved.

Prof. Nhlapo is convinced that once the Bill has been promulgated, it will enable men who are already married to legally acquire as many more wives as are prepared to join their marriage – provided the African customary rituals are followed ...

The commission has made a number of proposals to safeguard the rights of women who enter into monogamous and polygamous African customary marriages, not all of which have been incorporated into the Bill. (p. 2)

The Department of Home Affairs, however, did not feel themselves instructed to marry white men to more than one wife, and Landman can testify to the fact that the Department gave her office telephone number to the multitudes of white men phoning them to enquire and visiting them in order to solemnise marriage to another wife. Landman would receive many calls per day from angry wives and hopeful husbands for many weeks to come.

Liebenberg also interviewed Dr Fritz Gaum, then the Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK). Gaum emphasised that the Christian standpoint on marriage was clearly for one man and one woman to marry, and that Landman was only seeking attention and was probably not even serious.

The next day there was a discussion programme on the Afrikaans radio station, called RSG (Radio Sonder Grense (Radio Without Borders). Landman and Gaum got into a heated argument and Landman insisted that Gaum should withdraw his remark that she was looking for attention. She accused him of talking without thinking.

There were reactions to Liebenberg's articles of which only three can be mentioned here. They were of diverse content. Potgieter from Johannesburg in the *Citizen* (1999:10) says that instead of a call for polygamy to end the high divorce rate, there should be an outcry to make divorce more difficult, which would be the Christian way. Mrs. Schultheis from Maraisburg (*Citizen* 1999) feels that the church should reprimand Landman because polygamy is against the 7th and 10th commandment. However, Mrs. Robinson from Uvongo (*Citizen* 1999:10) admires Landman for putting polygamy on the table but warns against this leading to too many children being born who will be on state welfare.

Incidentally, those Afrikaans readers who wrote letters on polygamy seldomly commented on the legality of multiple-partner-relationships. Under the theme of legality, one can therefore take note of interviews with lawyers in an article responding to Landman under the heading 'Is vele wywe ons toekomstgeluk?' (Are concubines our future?) in *Rooi Rose* (1999:25–26). This article was written by Elmarie Otto, who interviewed Elsa Steyn from the (then) Rand Afrikaans Universiteit's Law Faculty. Steyn reminds readers that the new law's aim (Customary Marriages 120 of 1998) is not to promote polygamy but to give women in a polygamous relationship a better juristic position. This is in contrast to what Nhlapo from the Law Commission indicated earlier in Theme 3, and one can assume that there was confusion among white Afrikaans people on the legality of 'polygamy' for whites, from the many calls to Home Affairs and Landman herself.

#### Theme 4: Polygamy is already a reality among Afrikaans people

Landman's polygamy article was published on Wednesday the 14th of January, and on the Saturday three days later, Carien Fourie published an interview with Landman, in *Naweek Beeld*, under the heading 'Pleidooi vir poligamie het mans se oë laat vonkel, sê teoloog' (The plea for polygamy put a sparkle in men's eyes, says theologian) (1999:2). Within days Landman's article had become a 'pleidooi' (a plea) for polygamy which was to the benefit of men. Soon, the word 'veelwywery', a vulgar Afrikaans word for (black) polygamy, appeared. Landman was unhappy about this, but the article, and the response of people to it, was no longer in her hands. The office of *Beeld* informally informed Landman that they were receiving huge amounts of letters, many of which could not be published because of risky language, improper severity of arguments and personal attacks on Landman. Those published – this, in a time before WhatsApp and other social media platforms – provided interesting insight in what people, including Afrikaans people, experienced behind closed doors, and how they saw reality in a way that was very different from what was expected from their stereotypes.

A woman from Cape Town wrote a letter in *Beeld* under a pseudonym, 'Geskeide vrou (weens man se affaire)' (divorced woman, because of husband's affair) (1999:8). She writes that polygamy is already a reality because of the multiple affairs of men. She pleads that polygamy (for white people) should become legal in order for divorces to stop. In a letter in *Beeld* from another woman, De Lange from Centurion (1999:13), dreams – apparently light-heartedly – of her husband marrying a second wife who will carry out all the responsibilities she now has, while she can go on holiday alone. 'Pro-poligamie' (Pro-polygamy) from the Cape (*Beeld* 1999:19) gives Landman a high five: men having more than one woman in their lives will no more be considered criminals.

However, Combrinck from Potchefstroom (*Beeld*) (1999:13) felt that if Landman can use the Bible in favour of

polygamy, Landman can also claim that the Bible is *not* against paedophiles, drugs and child pornography because these things are not mentioned in the Bible. Mr Van Staden from Sunnyside in Pretoria (1999:13) writes in *Beeld* that three wives would give him three times more problems. They would all want a sports car, three times more unfinished needlework would lie around in the house, and he would be reminded not once, but thrice that the paint on the garage door is peeling off. Other letters suggested that a man at a certain age can hardly keep his one wife happy and that he would leave three wives in utter disappointment.

### Theme 5: (The idea of) Polygamy is pure entertainment

Probably because the issue of polygamy touched a nerve among Afrikaans people, it became job creating among journalists and columnists, some of whom used it to entertain readers. Kerneels Breytenbach, in an attempt to be funny, in a column in *Rapport* 'Trippe Trappe Trone' under the heading 'Dié tweevrou-storie is definitief een skoonheid te veel' (Two wives are one beauty too many) (1999:11), equates polygamy with prostitution in a somewhat unclear argument. Jeanne Goosen writes a delightfully chirpy article in the column 'Vrysprak' (*Vrydag* 1999) in which she imagines Mrs. Suburbia and her husband to be liberated from their boring and stereotyped lives by polygamy.

André le Roux writes in his column, 'Op die man af' (To the point) in *Sarie* (1999a:15) comically about the pros and cons of having more than one wife. He invites Landman to come and work in his garden as it is there that he wants a knowledgeable woman.

### Theme 6: Polygamy is against women's rights

Very few, if any, Afrikaans readers refer to the fact that polygamy may indeed infringe on women's rights. Prof Etienne de Villiers, though, ethicist at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, was interviewed by the *Kerkbode* (1999), the official newsletter of the NGK. He said 'dit is vreemd dat daar deur 'n vroueteoloog na 'n pre-moderne instelling soos die poligame huwelik teruggegryp word. Hy sê hoewel die poligame huwelik deel van die kulturele patroon van die Ou Testament was, is daar by hom geen twyfel dat die monogame huwelik reeds in die tyd van Jesus aan die orde van die dag was...' (De Villiers finds it strange that Landman, as a woman theologian known for her fight for women's rights, should be propagating polygamy, which, although, polygamous marriages were part of the cultural system of the Old Testament, he believes that monogamistic marriages were already common during the New Testament).

The *Huisgenoot* is a magazine aiming at a market to which Landman did not want to expose herself on the issue of polygamy, and she refused them an interview. However, Marie Opperman published an article in *Huisgenoot* (1999:15) under the heading 'Gedeelde huwelik: Jou man met 3 vroue' (Share your marriage with three women). The article was accompanied by a photo of a man sitting in a comfortable

chair with three women around him, the one kneeling in front of him, the second one waiting on him with food and a third one giving him a shoulder massage. Words were used such as 'harems' and 'concubines'. The article itself was not that bad and included an interview with Pik Botha, previous Cabinet Minister, who supported Landman philosophically but pointed to the impracticalities of having more than one wife.

Ironically enough, letters published in the *Huisgenoot* in reaction to this article rejected the polygamy presented in the article as taking women back in time to be 'byvroue' (concubines) (Marlena 1999:11), and 'vloer-lappe' (floor rags/cloths) (Gerber 1999). Landman was blamed for this and was accused of undermining women's fight for liberation and equality.

## Conclusion

In the three days after Christina Landman published an article 'Polygamie, ditsem!' (Yes for polygamy!) in the Afrikaans newspaper *Beeld* (1999), she was interviewed by 21 journalists. They were mainly from Afrikaans newspapers and magazines, but there were also journalists from English South Africa, Brazil, Italy and Argentina. Alexandra Ozorio De Almeida, for instance, published 'Theóloga receita poligamia contra divórcio' (Theologian prescribes polygamy against divorce) in the local Brazilian paper *Folha de S.Paulo* (1999:16), and Chris Baron published 'Positive polygamy: Sign up here for the timeshare marriage' in the local South African *Sunday Times* (1999:7). As far as Afrikaans articles were concerned, Hanlie Retief wrote 'Christina Landman: Mans én vroue dra albei skuld, en laat haar bloed borrel' for *Rapport* (Men and women are both to be blamed) (1999:12), and in *Beeld* Stofberg (1999:14) published, 'Prof. Christina en die p-woord: Sy sou eerder 'n setpil as 'n feminis wil wees' (Prof. Christina and the p-word: She would rather be a suppository than a feminist').

Apart from the written media, Landman forthwith participated in 32 radio and television shows during the next few weeks 'Beeld-rubriek wek oral opspraak' (*Beeld*-column make waves) (Korrespondent 1999). This included an interview with BBC (radio). On 22 March 1999, she participated in the Felicia Mabuza-Suttle Show (TV1) and round about that time also in *Pasella*, a coffee table show on TV2.

Although Landman surprisingly found herself later in the year to be named among the 50 most influential women in South Africa in *Sarie* (Le Roux 1999b:20), her reception by Afrikaans readers, because of the identification with polygamy was – and has remained – ambivalent, as is shown by the following themes extracted from the above letters and articles written on the subject:

- The first theme is that monogamy is the will of God, and when polygamy is mentioned in the Bible it is to warn how disastrous it is. Strangely enough, this is not a theme

strongly presented in the letters of Afrikaans readers, probably because they wanted experts, that is, theological professors to answer to this. This was not a time when the Afrikaans laity expressed themselves theologically.

- The second theme is presented by a single letter asking whether there is a universal rule that all people should be monogamous or polygamous.
- The third theme is on the legality of white men marrying more than one wife, where experts and not letter writers speak on this, but not conclusively.
- The fourth theme is well represented by women who have divorced their husbands because of their affairs, but now express their wish that they could all have stayed on in a polygamous relationship.
- The fifth theme is frivolous and turns the concept of polygamy into a comedy. It was indeed a concept foreign to Afrikaans people who viewed the practice of polygamy among black as a token of them being 'uncivilised' and 'heathen'.
- The sixth theme is very serious and states that the practice of polygamy infringes on women's rights.

In short, those Afrikaans readers who are against polygamy find it unbiblical, hurtful towards women, illegal and impractical. Of concern are, firstly, the sexist overtones in letters and columns where men degradingly describe their dreams of more than one obedient wife, and secondly, the disrespectful overtones in words such as 'harem' and 'concubines' – previously used to look down on black culture – in letters and articles that presuppose that Landman's polygamy is an attack on Afrikaner culture.

In an interview in August 1999 with *Challenge*, a South African ecumenical magazine, Landman is quoted to have said 'I still do not want to be ordained because of the hierarchy in church structures' (Majiza 1999:6). However, in 2006 Landman was licenced and in 2008 ordained as a minister of the Word in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), previously the apartheid black and brown 'daughter churches' of the white Dutch Reformed Church. In 2010, she was elected as the Actuarium of the Northern Synod and, in 2018, as the Actuarium of the General Synod of URCSA. She is one of three white women pastors in this national church.

The Church Order and Stipulations of the General Synod (2016) of URCSA contains in Stipulation 37.2 ('Marriages and membership') restrictions on polygamists as members:

### Marriages and membership

1. Couples who have contracted a traditional or civil marriage and who both desire to become members of the church should be encouraged to have their marriage also consecrated or solemnised in the church. Couples living together as husband and wife must get married legally before they may be accepted as members.
2. If a couple is married legally or in terms of traditional custom, and one of them wishes to become a member of

the church, she or he may do so, even if the other partner, who may not be a Christian or in any case is not a member, refuses to allow the marriage to be consecrated in church.

3. Polygamists who have become Christians will be allowed to make public profession of their faith in Christ and partake of the sacraments, once the Presbytery has conducted a thorough investigation at the request of the church council and approved it. Polygamists may not be elected to special offices.
4. Wives of polygamists, who have converted to Christ, will be baptised and become members after making public profession of faith.
5. A member who enters a polygamous marriage may be disciplined.

However, in 2022, one of the regional synods of the URCSA, the Southern Synod (previously the Southern Transvaal Synod), decided to remove these stipulations from their regional Church Order and Stipulations.

And although the white DRC (NGK) at the moment gives much synodical attention to human sexuality in terms of homosexuality and pre-marital sex, polygamy (or multiple-partner-relationships) is still not on their agenda. That is in spite of the fact that, since 1999, their members have expressed a serious need to talk about this.

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The author has declared that no competing interest exists.

### Author's contributions

C.L. the sole author of this research article.

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### Data availability

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### Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author and the publisher.

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