



***Saviour of the
nations, come;
Virgin's Son, here
make Thy home!
Marvel now, O
heaven and earth,
That the Lord
chose such a
birth. Not by
human flesh and
blood; By the***

***Spirit of our God Was the Word of God made flesh, Woman's
offspring, pure and fresh. Wondrous birth! O wondrous Child
Of the virgin undefiled! Though by all the world disowned, Still
to be in heaven enthroned. From the Father forth He came And
returneth to the same, Captive leading death and hell High the
song of triumph swell! Thou, the Father's only Son, Hast over
sin the victory won. Boundless shall Thy kingdom be; When
shall we its glories see? Brightly doth Thy manger shine,
Glorious is its light divine. Let not sin o'ercloud this light; Ever
be our faith thus bright. Praise to God the Father sing, Praise
to God the Son, our King, Praise to God the Spirit be Ever and
eternally.*** (Ambrose of Milan 340-397)

Dear friends and family: This year 2012 has gone by in next to no time. Yet so much is left undone. We can only plead: *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison!* Thankfully he doesn't deal with us as we deserve, but rather rewards us according to his undeserved grace and mercy + *Hallelujah* +

It's been a wonderful year for our family here in Murrayfield. All four children are still with us even if we are bracing for their departure early January: Friederike is off to university in France after graduating from Tukkies and Detlev to college in Finland after completing the "Abitur" and "Matric" at the German School (DSP) on a high note. Christoph is not quite sure yet whether he'll be accepted in Germany for training in our Churches diaconic institution at Guben while Matthias is burning to finish off school at the DSP before making his way overseas too. That has gotten our thoughts focused on moving too, but probably just closer to Seminary and University!

While Christoph and Detlev visited Namibia with "their" orchestra, Angelika and myself had an invitation to the mission festival in Gr.Oesingen (Germany). Matzi accompanied us for most of the time although he travelled to

Frankfurt and Munich all on his own visiting friends like “old faithful”: Daniel. We had a wonderful time in the European summer visiting old friends and family right down to the Schwarzwald and up north to the Island of Sylt. It was like coming home and we’re so grateful that we could experience these lovely holidays together – thanks to the gracious support of hospitable friends and family.

Throughout the year I was travelling quite a bit getting to Finland for the first time on invitation by our friends in LEAF. That invitation made it possible to join the congress for Luther research for the first time too. This took place in Helsinki and introduced me to a number of frontline Luther scholars besides the ones I knew already from Germany and Missouri – scholars like James Nestigen, Timothy J. Wengert and Mark C. Mattes. That was indeed quite special. Together with professors Bob Kolb (CS St.Louis) and John Pless (CTS Ft.Wayne) we also started looking at ways to prepare our local post-graduates for the next congress thinking along the lines of “Luther and his theology in Africa”. Towards the end of this trip Rev. Tapani Simojoki together with Westfield House (Cambridge, UK) hosted an International Symposium on their

inviting campus. He did a marvellous job of getting confessional Lutherans from all over together and focused on relevant issues in Church and missions. Besides staying with Professor Dr David Scaer (CTS Ft.Wayne) the guided tour around Cambridge visiting the Christian sites and going to see an open air dramatization of Shakespear’s “King Lear” with Dr. Makito Masaki (Japan) and Rev. Stephen van der Hoek (Australia) in the “Backs” are some of the pleasant add-ons (*super bonum additum*) to this extra-ordinary excursion to the British Isles. A real regret is that I missed my cousin Karl-Heinz due to a chain of unfortunate events.

Going to St. Louis in February to visit first a Doxology seminar hosted by Prof. Dr. Harold Senkbeil and Prof. Dr. John Kleinig and then join the convention of our partners in the South Illinois District at their kind invitation to present a South Africa report and Bible study was very special indeed. So much so that we tried to get Dr. Senkbeil and his colleague Dr. Beverly Yahnke to host a similar event for us Lutherans in Southern Africa at the Good Shepherd Retreat (Hartebeespoort Dam) coming February. Sadly Dr. Senkbeil had to undergo emergency surgery and this plan was cancelled for the time

being. President Timothy Scharr together with his people like P. Brian Holle and P. David Kern were excellent hosts throughout the 2nd half of this visit and their district convention was memorable indeed. Thankfully they have agreed to support the LCSA yet again during the next three years. We are very grateful for that! President Scharr came over to visit not only our pastor's convention at Good Shepherd in March, but also our national synod held last week in Wartburg (KZN). At both occasions we were blessed to ordain three candidates respectively. First time round it was Silas Mogale (NW), Pheny Mokgaimena (BW) and Bheki Ngobese (MP) and now it was Moses Mokopanele (KZN), Mpolaise Masibi (NW) and Thokane Skosana (MP). These "joint-ventures" in ordination are just another aspect of the close partnership between LCSA and SID for which we praise God and give Him thanks regularly.

As Bishop of our Church I was also invited to several meetings local and abroad. In that way I came to see the Monkey Valley (Cape Town) at the LUCSA conference, where normally brother Dean Johannes Mafereka (NW) represented me the past years. However it was high time that I see for

myself and I did not regret it, because I gained valuable insights and had a very pleasant time with numerous Lutheran Bishops from around Southern Africa and their partners from overseas. That's how at last I got to meet Kirchenrätin Inken Wöhlbrand personally too after extended correspondence for many years now. Most spectacular are the new plans for a Lutheran university in South Africa. This initiative is driven by Dr. Ishmael Noko, who's making great strides forward in this remarkable endeavour. As Bishop Ramashapa passed away, he is filling those shoes too at least until a successor has been found. We are hopeful that that will happen this coming January.

In preparation for the ILC meeting in Canada, Archbishop Christian Ekong from the Evangelical Church in Nigeria invited us as members of the ILC in Africa to Nairobi, Kenya. There we met as guests of Archbishop Dr. Walter Obare DD and worked on those issues that affect us as Lutherans on this African continent. The trip there and back was spectacular as the pilots from SAA took us right down, close and all around Mt. Kilimanjaro. Without clouds and under bright sunshine

this snow-capped peak prompted a lot of photos, ohs and ahs. I think that's what people call a "Joy ride".

Well, the big and serious conference of the ILC followed suit and was led by our good friend and dear brother Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt (SELK) in Niagara (Canada). Here we had another chance to finalize important issues for Prof. Dr. Werner Klän's imminent move from the LTH Oberursel, Germany to the University of Pretoria, South Africa. The falls were quite spectacular – actually much more than I had remembered. Bishop Reinstorf from the FELSiSA gave a series of Bible Studies on some of the parables of Jesus, which were very well received during this conference.

In Atlanta the LCMS hosted a conference on confessional leadership. Dr. Joel Lehnbaaur had put this together for Lutherans across the globe and thus we saw a lot of friends from Europe, Africa and Australia. During this conference I was seated next to my brother Rev. Dr. Mandla Khumalo (St.Peters, Middleburg) and my old friend Pastor Randy Golter, who now heads World Missions. Obviously we had a lot of hot discussion topics to keep us going those few days and there was an ongoing repertoire of inspiring talks up front

from various specialists and fundis. I updated my database with lots of pictures of whose who in the confessional world. As at all meetings there was ample opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones, but also to work at forging important ties and relationships, coming seminars, workshops and other church business too. Thankfully hurricane Sandy did not really impact on our schedule – even though some participants were not able to come like Bishop Bollay from Liberia. That was quite sad, because we had some important issues to work on. However that's how things work – and compared with the extreme havoc wrecked by the hurricane these mishaps were digested even if with a bit of grumbling. It troubles me greatly that we are not in the position to have his ten or so students from the Lutheran Church in Liberia joining our Seminary again next year. This is purely a financial and bureaucratic consideration and has got nothing to do with these students capabilities or suitability for service in the Church as pastors or deaconesses. That makes this decision such a hard one. Our Church and Seminary are not in the position to put up the required \$50, 000 to pay for the costs anticipated for these ten students including their air travel, food money, tuition, accommodation etc. Even though our

treasurer Berno Niebuhr made a concerted effort to raise awareness and also the necessary funding, we were not able to present another option to our Seminaries Board of Directors and this cost saving factor had to be implemented.

All in all it does look as if we will have to concentrate more and more on expanding the circle of friends and supporters of the Seminary so that we can provide sustainable bursaries for students and eventually also salaries for our own teachers on a permanent and ongoing basis. We are very grateful that the Mission of Lutheran Churches in SA – LCSA, FELSISA and MLC – have increased their ongoing support for the Seminary substantially in the next year. That adds confidence and gives a better perspective for the future of our work here in Pretoria even if it was at the immediate expense of the planned student ministry at the university. Lot's remains to be done and please continue to pray that the good Lord of the harvest will continue to provide hands, means and joyful capacity to do the work that needs to be done and that he will oppose all evil endeavours of those, who try to hinder, block and thwart his good work in Church and Missions.

The induction of our Lutheran Church at Mthwalume in KZN this past year was a special highlight on the LCSA Calendar. This kind of thing does not happen as regularly as in the heyday of church building frenzy. That's why we're very happy that this important milestone was reached on the South Coast between our main bases in Durban and Ohlangeni. Brother Peter managed that construction with help of local friends and the festivities were something to behold – even if the rain ensured that we were grateful that the building was not that small after all, but that most of the guests and visitors could fit into the sanctuary together with the congregation. Together with the director of missions of SELK Rev. Roger Zieger (LKM - Berlin, Germany) we then visited the Ohlangeni parish and rejoiced over the foundations for Pastor Ndwane's home that had been laid as well as enjoying the view from Peter's terrace up in the hills amongst his people.

As time goes on I am more and more grateful for the help and assistance given by brother Christoph and the MLC especially in the work up in Botswana. Not only do they do substantial work in consolidating the mission activities there with their financial support of local pastors, but his visitation work up

there is priceless. Thankfully he keeps me in the loop of things and I am hopeful that this work of the Lutheran Church in Botswana will indeed continue to stabilize and grow by the grace of God. It is indeed helpful that he is very much at home in both isiZulu and seTswana – and that helps overcome my shortcomings in that regard quite significantly. Christoph also chairs the meetings of the MLC and also of the members at LTS giving me the opportunity to value his input in the mission work of our Lutheran Church even more. This year Christoph preached at the mission festival at St. Paul's Lutheran Church and I was encouraged to ask him much more regularly to do this wonderful work of preaching!

Even if we could use much more Lutheran missionaries in priority areas like Swaziland, Botswana, Rustenburg, Northern KZN and also in student ministries at the University of Pretoria, we are grateful for the faithful work being done by pastors and missionaries throughout the five dioceses – often under very difficult circumstances.

A special word of thanks goes to those pastors, who write sermons on request by my father to be translated into Zulu and Tswana respectively and to be distributed by snail- and

email to many across Southern Africa. Writing a sermon like that for public usage is a very good discipline and practice and if we would all do it, we would only need to write about 2 per year. Thankfully my sister Elisabeth Rencken supports my father with the distribution of these sermons as well. May the good Lord send workers of his liking into the harvest – so that the big harvest can be brought in to his glory and for the salvation of many, many people. Although we could ordain six pastors throughout this last year, we also had to bury pastor Pieter Dithlareng early in February. That left his young wife and small children destitute. There remains a lot to be done and may God have mercy on us and all our people. Pray also that the good supportive work of ALPIK in KZN, the MLC in Botswana and at the Seminary, but also of our faithful brethren supporting willing pastors will continue to prosper and grow for the benefit of building the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, which is doing most of its valuable work on a shoestring.

The Weber's 150 anniversary was celebrated in Wittenberg and was organized efficiently by my father and eldest sister Ruth Beneke. It was a delightful occasion for our family. On

invitation of Pastor Helmut Paul (pastor loci) we stayed in the parsonage for the first time since we left Wittenberg more than 12 years ago, because we were to preach on that Sunday too. This also was like a home-coming. Meeting my dear cousins, who had come all the way from Gr. Britain for this festivity, we had a fabulous time together. Listening to Prince Bongani Zulu from Dlodolomo, KZN tell the history of Hermansburg missionaries in N.Zululand in German as he was dressed in traditional Zulu garb was a special treat. He's a descendant of the royal kraal at Emyathi, who gave permission to our forebear Fritz Weber in 1862 to settle and missionize there. Today he teaches Lutheran dogmatics at the Lutheran Institute of Theology in Pietermaritzburg. Living proof that Lutheran missions does not come back empty – even if during his lifetime old Fritz baptized only 2 Zulus in about 20 years and did not see much of the good fruit from these mission endeavours. It was a great pleasure also to hear our family friend Radikobo Ntsimane recall some of those familiar happenings in Enhlanhleni of times long gone. It's so good and special that personal friends like Ntsimane and Zulu can now be part of family celebrations like this without any trouble at all. Some things do change to the better after all!

After the Seminary had closed with the annual prize-giving and a final thanks giving meal at St.Pauls by sister Renate Straeuli, who has prepared lunch for our students throughout the year now, our Church held its regular synod in Wartburg during the second week of December. This was the first time that I had to preside at such a synod as Bishop. Thanks to the good work of all my deans, pastors and the congregational delegates, but also due to the support from our friends and family in Wartburg – especially sister Elisabeth Rencken - and serious preparations back home at the Seminary by Isolde Paul and Birgit Böhmer this all went off reasonably well – at least without major casualties. I am still very grateful to Pastor Michael Ahlers for opening up his Church in Kirchdorf hospitably and graciously, so that we could hold the closing service with the three mentioned ordinations there. That was a fitting closure of a good synod – and praise be to God for that. Together pastors, delegates and guests worked hard and long hours on several important issues and overall I believe, we gained hope and confidence for the way forward. Even if my pastors are well acquainted to our Lutheran ways, I think that these synods and their busy schedules are especially important for the laity to be confirmed in these ways also. Lots

of important issues were raised, debated vigorously and enthusiastically and I pray that this will provide a good platform for our work in the coming years. Obviously I personally have also learnt a whole lot and I pray that the Church will be patient as we try to put this into practice and continue to learn more and more. Good reports on the works of the Church, bible studies, theological papers on burning issues like missions, Seminary education, works of mercy and well prepared sermons, joyfully sung hymns and faithful liturgies kept us focused on the main theme: **“Lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”** (Luk 21:28b NIV) It is our coming redeemer, who alone gives us courage and hope and joy to continue in the good work, he has started amongst us. He will complete it to his honour and glory – in his own good time + Praise be to him always + Hallelujah, Hallelujah +

Now it is already time for the fourth Advent and Christmas. Angelika has started to decorate the house and make the necessary preparations for Christmas. Our children are very active in helping getting things ready. I am very happy that Pastor Martin Paul invites me regularly to help serve at the

Lord's table and even preach in St.Paul's. God willing, I will do the same at the Seminary on Christmas and in Wittenberg for Epiphany thanks to the invitations from pastors Mntambo and Helmut Paul as I am very grateful for these opportunities to serve in our beloved Lutheran Church here in Southern Africa.

May you have a very blessed Christmas and a very prosperous 2013 as we wait for our Lord to hear our prayers in Advent: ***Stir up your power, O Lord, and come and help us by Your might, that the sins which weigh us down may be quickly lifted by Your grace and mercy; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*** (LSB Pastoral Care Companion, Collect for the 4th Advent, Pg. 539)

Yours sincerely

Wilhelm and Angelika Weber in Murrayfield

Holiday of the apostle St. Thomas of India:

21st December 2012.