

LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA



BISHOP'S REPORT 2012

*STAND UP AND LIFT UP YOUR
HEADS, BECAUSE YOUR
REDEMPTION IS DRAWING
NEAR. (LK.21:28B)*

WARTBURG
KZN: SOUTH AFRICA

Honourable Synod, members and friends of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with the Holy Spirit – one God now and forever +*

Dear brothers and sisters – we as members of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa are part of the one holy Christian Church and together with this church we are more or less patiently waiting for the return of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ in his glory to judge the living and the dead. That's the theme of Advent and also of this synod. We are convinced that our Lord Jesus Christ is coming to fulfil the work he has started long ago – also in and amongst us. His work of redemption and salvation, his work of healing, transformation and sanctification. Encouraged by his victorious resurrection and triumphant overcoming of all evil, sin, death and devil we are looking forward to our Lord's final consummation of his glorious conquest when at last all knees will bow before him and every tongue will confess that he is the Lord of lords, King of kings and God of gods.

As we look forward to this glorious outcome of all history, we are confident and full of great expectations already, because he, who has promised his disciples and his Church: *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* (Mat 28:20b NIV) is here with us even today according to his firm commitment: *“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”* (Mat 18:20). This makes such gatherings of church people so very special – not so much the venue, not so much the agenda and not even so much the list of officials, delegates and visitors – but rather the very presence of the Lord our God himself in our midst: Jesus Christ – the lamb of God, who carries the sins of the world and ours – he, who sits at the right hand of God the Father and has been given all authority in heaven and on earth – he, who even now sanctifies, makes holy, purifies, strengthens and comforts all who believe in him: *“by sending into their hearts the Holy Spirit, he rules, consoles, and makes them alive and defends them against the devil and the power of sin.”* (CA III) He is here and that is why we are at peace and very much at home even here in Wartburg, KZN!

ENCOURAGED BY HIS PROMISES

It is this personal presence of the Lord, which gives this gathering in his name its dignity, but also its festive, celebratory and joyful character - this special status as churchly synod, even as we plea for his mercy and grace so that we may follow his decrees diligently in thought, word and deed and that by the same and under his gracious and loving guidance abide faithfully in his ordinances, institutions and mandates trusting solely in his promises, commitments, pledges and testaments: *“The one who calls you is faithful and he will surely do it.”* (1Th 5:24)

It is this very same Lord Jesus Christ, who advises us: *If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”* (Luk 11:13 NIV) Therefore we plead with confidence for the presence of the Holy Spirit to keep and guide us in the faithful

testimonies of our Lord (cf. Joh.15:26) as we go about the business of our calling in this our beloved Lutheran Church in Southern Africa as part of the one holy Christian Church and God's people on the way towards his goal. Trusting firmly that he hears our prayers for his own sake and because he promised to do so and as he is trustworthy and faithful we laud and magnify his holy name as we are gathered here together – praising his miracles and wonders, which are new every morning and by which he has saved us to be part of his own holy congregation in this world and age and assured that therefore the endeavors, struggles and workings of our calling in his mission are not in vain, but serve his good purpose – even though small, weak, poor and of hardly any consequence in our own eyes. That trust and praise and assurance is part of the hope our Lord Jesus Christ instilled in us with his admonition to his missionary St. Paul: *“My power is made perfect in weakness.”* (2.Cor.12:9)

Yes, weakness, struggles and sinfulness are still plaguing us as part of the church militant. And yes - we're not there yet, but we are getting there by the grace of the living God, to be what and where he wants us to be – his family and united with him in everlasting bliss of joy, peace and divine life and fulfillment. Yet, now already the evil forces and serious calamities and mayor problems no longer reign over us nor do they control our lives. They can't separate us from God's love and goodness either – not even for a brief period, never mind for ever. By his grace and forgiveness he has overcome for us and he still overcomes for us daily and mercifully our own dreadful sinfulness and mortal habitude – and continuously binds us graciously more and more to himself, his life, his truth and his way, so that even now we are looking up and towards him. No longer downcast, lost and hopeless, but confident that our final redemption is drawing near. He's not going to be long now, his coming is around the corner and so is your eternal salvation. Therefore look up and walk tall – you are the Lord's and he is yours + In and through him we will overcome. Thanks be to God – now and forever + Amen.

+ THANKFUL FOR GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY TO OUR CHURCH+

We have all reason to be thankful towards the triune God for his loving kindness by which he daily and richly provides our bodies and souls with all that we need to support this body and life. *“All this he does only out fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.”* [Martin Luther's explanation of the 1st Article of the Apostolic Creed] We thank the Lord of the Church Jesus Christ for having kept us and our beloved Lutheran Church in Southern Africa throughout this past synodical period of three years with his grace and mercy, especially with his most precious means of grace: Word and Sacrament. *“Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces (the only saving) faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel. It teaches that we have a gracious God, not through our merit but through Christ's merit, when we so believe.”* [CA V]

Throughout the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, in all five dioceses Church services were held Sunday for Sunday, God's word was preached addressing God's most holy law and forgiving gospel to his needful people – young and old – mostly in isiZulu and seTswana, but also in English here and there. Babies, infants and others were baptised in the name of the triune God and thus incorporated into Christ and his one, holy Christian Church. Teen-agers and other adults were gifted with the Holy Spirit under the laying on of hands, confirmed by the Holy Spirit in the triune God's baptismal grace and his most holy calling from on high to lead pure, sanctified and God-pleasing lives all the days of their lives wherever God has placed them in this very time and age. Poor, miserable sinners like myself confessed their sins in public and in private confession: *"I a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto you all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended you and justly deserved your temporal and eternal punishment ... I am truly sorry for all this and ask for grace."* [Corporate and individual confession] These contrite sinners were absolved by the pastor with the precious and efficacious words: *"In the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I as a called and ordained servant of the Church, forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Depart in peace +"*. Forgiven sinners praised the triune God in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, praying together and in solitude for all people especially for those in authority, but also for those in need, suffering and in bondage, for the Church and its pastors, deans and bishops, for our treasured Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane and for all who teach and all who learn, for the mission of the Church amongst unbelievers, heathens and those no longer going to church or the sacraments, for the conversion of Jews, Muslims and other idolaters/blasphemers, for good works of mercy amongst the needy, for the upkeep and support of orphans and widows, foreigners, travellers, migrants, refugees, the unemployed and ill, the poor and outcast, discriminated, demoralized and ostracised, the outcast, suffering, dying; for good weather, peace and prosperity - the delivery from all evil – just as Jesus has taught us and all his followers to pray in the "Our Father". Again fifty-two sermons were written and translated in isiZulu/seTswana to be distributed as hard-copies, but also in the internet so that more and more people would be blessed by God's word – and that even those congregations without a pastor, could have an elder reading these blessed sermons for edification in the true faith as members of our Church and Lutheran congregations throughout Southern Africa. It is very encouraging and heartening that faithful Lutherans gather Sunday for Sunday around God's most holy word, singing joyfully with our beloved and precious hymnal and praying together with the Christian Church to our Father, who is in heaven – in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thankfully again in great faithfulness shut-ins were visited: ill, handicapped and imprisoned. Pastors celebrated the Lord's Supper with their congregations Sunday for Sunday and they bring these most holy and divine gifts to the shut-ins too thus providing the most precious offerings of our Lord and saviour in the true Body and Blood given/shed for us and for the forgiveness of all our sins, so that we may be in him and he in

us and nothing can ever separate us from him just as we thankfully sing: “*I have eaten Jesus’ body, I have drunk his blood; now he cannot forget me, I remain in him and he in me. My God, I pray through Christ’s blood, make sure my end is good.*”¹ This is in the Kopelo Hymn Nr. 316: “*Jesu, Jesu, Montshwedi s’japaanong, a ke swe ka kagiso, Mong*”.² Members of our Church believe, teach, hold and confess that this is “*the true treasure of the Church – namely the Most Holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.*” [Luther’s 62nd Thesis, 1517]³ That is why everywhere in our Church the people venerate the Lord’s supper with fervour and adoration, respect and thanksgiving towards the living God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We know what it is about. We distinguish it from normal fellowship meals or worldly parties. That is why we kneel down at the Lord’s prayer and especially at the recitation of the words of institution and during the distribution. We know and confess that we don’t deserve this heavenly gifts of our Lords divine institution and last will and final testament. We have no right to included and have part of them, but our Lord has granted us the privilege and honour that we may partake in this – just as we are, because he is gracious and merciful – and we therefore praise his glorious name in all humility and pious adoration. That’s the reason we don’t treat this our Lord’s Supper like a circus or some other form of secular entertainment or worldly distraction. We don’t photograph these most holy occasions, but rather eat and drink as he has commanded us. We refrain from distracting us or others as we are wholly dedicated to listen carefully to every word of God’s holiest institution and Christ’s last testament – that demands all our attention and most focused celebration. We as pastors take care that we and our elders/altar guilds use proper vestments, special glass- and silverware, clean cloths and napkins – very alert to not get lost here or there, spill the holy goods and confuse or put off the communicants. We make sure that everything is done in a dignified fashion and orderly manner – and that the vestry, the sacristy and especially the altar area is clean and free of rubble. The pictures in the Church should be suited to uplift the congregation in faith and to encourage them to look up to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.

THE GIFT OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

There are some congregations in our church the LCSA that still play brass instruments [Kahlehong, Thandekukhanya, Dumbe, Umlazi, Ohlangeni]⁴, others have the Marimba [Serowe] and some use drums and cymbals. I don’t know of any, where they have an organ or a piano except at the Seminary and in Phoenix,

¹ “*Wer weiss wie nahe mir mein Ende ...*” by Ämilie Juliane von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt and English translation by Francis Browne (February 2006). Evangelisches Gesangbuch 530.

² In the Zulu Hymnal “*Incwadi Yokuhlabela*” it is the refrain of Hymn Nr. 220: “*Nkosi, Nkosi, gegazi P’kaJesu ngihawukel’ ekufeni.*”

³ Luther, M. (1999, c1957). *Vol. 31: Luther’s works, vol. 31 : Career of the Reformer I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther’s Works (31:31). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

⁴ During my visit to Tanzania, which has one of the biggest Lutheran Churches worldwide (ELCT), brass bands were also widespread and playing those hymns, we know and love too. We should not easily loose this special gift of our Church.

KZN. We as pastors need to watch out that all the music in our Church remains in service of the gospel and proclaiming Christ, the Lord and Saviour of all – and never degenerate into lip service or just noise and distraction. The Church is the House of the Lord and therefore everything is subject to serve his holiness, his goodness and caring. The same holds true for the holy Liturgy. These are holy biblical orders and rites inspired by the Holy Spirit – and not free for us to do as we like. The Liturgy has as its main purpose to let God speak to his people in his holy word and let his people address him in divinely inspired language – that’s not only in the Apostolic/Nicene creeds as we respond to the readings of the epistle and gospel – but also in the *Introit* [Psalms]; the *Kyrie* [Mk.10,47]; the *Gloria in excelsis* [Lk.2,14] or the *Agnus Dei* [Joh.1,29]; the Offertory [Ps.51]; *Sanctus* [Is.6,3; Mt.21,9]; Our Father [Mt.6,9-13]; Word’s of Institution; the *Nunc dimittis* [Lk.2,29-32] and the Benediction [Nm.6,24ff]. All this is taken directly from the Bible and has been the language of the Church for more than 2 millennia. That is a very long and venerable tradition by any standard. That is why we should not deal lightly with that and should not just encourage any Tom, Dick and Harry to lead these most precious orders/rites, but should rather dedicate our pastoral expertise to them so that we sing, pray, read and speak in a God-pleasing way. That is our calling. That is what we were ordained to do. Therefore let us do it faithfully always praying: “*Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise*” [LSB 219] as we do during the holy orders of Matins.

PASTORS IN THE CHURCH

ORDINATION

After the ordination course with 10 candidates at the LTS in February/March 2012 we were in the privileged position to ordain three of those ten. The baruti Silas Mogale (NW), Bheki Ngobese (MP) and Phenyo Mokgaimena (BW) were ordained at the Pastor’s convention at Good Shepherd in March and have been installed in their various congregations since then. This past November we had another ordination course with yet again 10 candidates and again we are hopeful to ordain three candidates at the end of this synod: Mr. Mpolaise Masibi (NW), vicar Moses Mokopanele (GP) and finally Thokane Skosana (St.Peters, Middleburg).

PASTORAL CONVENTIONS

- 2010 Pastor’s convention in Cyara: 31st August – 2nd September
- 2012 Pastor’s convention in Good Shepherd: 19th – 22nd March

RETIREMENT

In KwaZulu/Natal pastors Gule and Ndwane were officially retired in 2011; pastor Mthimkhulu from MP was retired in 2012; we thank our faithful fathers for serving God’s people so faithfully over so many

years. We are grateful that they continue to serve and help even as they are retired and preparing for the last stretch of the road towards our goal in heaven – being home with Christ!

DEATH AND BURIAL

- Aaron Ntuli serving in the KZN diocese as pastor and dean passed away on the 1. June 2010 and was buried on the 5th in Enhlanhlani.
- Aaron Lenkwe serving in the North-West diocese as pastor and dean passed away on Pentecost, the 12th June 2011 and was buried on Saturday the 18th in Ventersdorp.
- Pieter Dithlareng serving in NW and BW dioceses as pastor passed away and was buried in Magopa on the 28th January 2012.

CHURCH COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Church Council gathered every Quarter for the past three years - mostly in the LHF Hall at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane. This is convenient, central and affordable, because the LTS accommodates and feeds us without large costs. We are grateful to the LTS for this service to the Church. I am very grateful that towards the end of this three year period the dioceses have managed to send not only their deans and their deputies, but also lay delegates to the Church Council with written reports. This adds significantly to promote good communication amongst us in the executive leadership of our Church assisting in the ongoing discussion, planning and management as we strive together to shepherd the Church faithfully and professionally: efficiently, transparently and sustainably. I must commend my deans that they have made great strides in this reporting process. We are working hard to not only have the Church Council well informed about what is happening in the various dioceses with its nearly fifty pastors and their families in all of our over hundred congregations, but also to have these congregations and pastors in the various dioceses updated regularly of what is happening in the Church. This happens primarily and regularly at the co-workers meetings in all dioceses. Therefore these meetings too are crucial to stay informed, but also to be continuously strengthened and encouraged by the mutual edification and communication at these fraternals. I commend you deans for leading these pastoral conventions regularly and faithfully. This is good and important work! It is very good that you gather regularly like that to confess your sins to each other and to forgive each other your sins in the name of the triune God and then to celebrate the Lord's Supper in joyous and anticipatory mood. However don't neglect the holy word of God: Read, teach and preach this too – even at these occasions. Don't hide your light under a bushel! Rather let it shine, encourage, admonish and help each other with faithful theology, pure doctrine and wholesome gospel. Preach sermons! Do exegesis of scriptural passages together! Contemplate and work on dogmatic topics and apply them to various pastoral

situations and cases. Don't be afraid of critique, be afraid of doing something against God's most holy and gracious will – and doing things besides and outside of his clear promises, institutions and mandates. Therefore seek the advice of trusted brethren, don't think you have to address complicated issues all on your own, rather share with your brothers and fathers – and God in his loving kindness will have mercy on you, he will hear your prayers and show you the way to go as faithful members of the Lutheran Church and his godly family here on earth.

I commend the deans, who have invited us and others from the Seminary and the Church to address issues of special concern and which are most challenging. Issues like the Theology of the cross, visitation, the role of women in the Church, office and the ministry, ancestral worship and others have been addressed in the past years by visiting professors like Professor Dr. Kleinig (Lutheran Church in Australia) and Professor John Pless (Concordia Theological Seminary Ft.Wayne, LCMS), bishops, pastors and teachers – and I believe with great benefit to those attending.

STATISTICS AND AVERAGES

The following diocesan statistics were reported over the past year. Regrettably the diocese in North-West has not yet reported any figures. In 1968 the LCSA had 22, 000 members of which 8, 457 were communicants. Now we are looking at an estimated total of only approximately 9, 756 communicant members reported by the deans in 2012. We need to remember forced removals, which destroyed critical mass of established congregations and also urbanization and HIV/Aids as factors impacting negatively on numerical growth.

DIOCESE	CONGREGATIONS + PASTORS	COMMUNICANT MEMBERS
Botswana	9 + 7 pastors	757
Gauteng	8 + 9 pastors	1, 856
KwaZulu/Natal	12 + 11 pastors	735
Mpumalanga	12 + 11 pastors	3,408
North-West	11 + 10 pastors	3,000 ?
LCSA	53 + 48	9, 756

In 2017 – that is five years from now – God willing – the LCSA will celebrate its 50th birthday. This 50th birthday coincides with the 500th birthday of the Lutheran Church.

ALMANAC 2012 - 2013

This is seen by the Church Council as a possible fundraiser for the LCSA. It is not as if the Almanac 2012 costs R50 or the calendar 2013 R40, but in the Church Council we have considered to use this calendar as a fundraiser. The Calendars 2013 are available here at the synod and can be collected at R40 per copy.

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN TSHWANE [LTS IN TSHWANE]

AGREEMENT WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

On the 8th June 2011 an agreement was signed by the University of Pretoria [UP] and the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tshwane [LTS] that enables the LTS to enrol its qualified students at the University for a Bachelor of Theology [BTh] degree. This degree is to be awarded by the university for the theological course taught at the Seminary by the Lutheran staff to its students. This theological course will incorporate the beginners course at LTS with Introductions into Hebrew and Greek grammar, Old and New Testament, English literacy and Computer competency as the initial stage, which will be supplemented by another three years of theological instruction before the degree is attained. This is an exciting prospect, because for the first time in our history our Seminary will be able to award an accredited degree. This is a noteworthy milestone in our history.

LCSA STUDENTS AND PROSPECTIVE LCSA MEMBERS AT LTS

Presently the LCSA has two deaconess students from Botswana in the courses at LTS – and one theology student from Mpumalanga: Thulani Hadebe from Belgrade. Mr. Monyepao, Katlego from Bapedi Lutheran and Mr. Eric Ghebotoe from Liberia with his wife have applied for admission into the LCSA – as have Mr. Siza Lugojobo and Mr. Shuttleworth Ntshie our minute takers at this synod. Mr. Zungu Maqoba and Nkosi Mduduzi are both from St.Peters Lutheran Church in Middleburg.

PRAY FOR THE SEMINARY AND SUPPORT IT FINANCIALLY AT PENTECOST

Please continue to pray for workers in the harvest! The Lord has promised to answer our prayers. Therefore don't give up praying – and do encourage young men to take up this truly great calling into the ordained ministry of the Church, just as you should encourage women to consider to apply for admission in the deaconess course at Seminary. We also need your financial support at the Seminary. Please don't forget the annual donation at Pentecost, which our Church has designated for this very purpose. There are still some faithful congregations like Ohlangeni, which support the Seminary regularly – but we should all consider very earnestly how we too could help LTS more effectively.

MISSION OF LUTHERAN CHURCHES [MLC]

PROMOTING THE LUTHERAN CHURCH WORLDWIDE

As Lutheran Church in Southern Africa we are a recipient and also fruit of Lutheran Churches doing Lutheran Missions. However since our inception as Lutheran Church in Southern Africa in 1967 – and even

long before - we have also been an active agent of Lutheran Missions too. In my view the LCSA diocese in Botswana and Swaziland, but also the move into Gauteng in the previous century were a direct result of our beloved Lutheran Church in Southern Africa being involved in Lutheran missions beyond our national, cultural and familiar borders. This mission work continues the work beyond the racial boundaries of our Church members, which addressed Indians in Durban/Glencoe and was carried out in cooperation with Germans and N. Americans from the very inception.

MLC HELPS SUSTAINING AND STABILIZING THE LCSA DIOCESE OF BOTSWANA

Today the LCSA is an active member of the Mission of Lutheran Churches, which is its official mission agency. Especially in Botswana we are greatly indebted to this mission organization with strong traditional ties to the LKM in Bleckmar, Germany [SELK], because this institution dedicated to the promotion of Lutheran missions worldwide has taken up all seven of the local pastors in Botswana into their personnel ranks to enable sustainable financing, support and supervision and in this way promote Lutheran mission endeavours in Botswana from Tutume up north to the Barolong area in the south. We will hear more of this work from the MLC representative Rev. Christoph Weber.

MLC STEPS UP SUPPORT FOR LTS

The MLC has also thankfully stepped up their substantial and significant support for the LTS of which it is an official member besides the LCSA and the FELSiSA. Despite serious financial challenges in this our time, the MLC has taken on the serious commitment to support my position at the LTS, which had been more and more untenable as the FELSiSA had informed of its intention to suspend the administration of my salary. Dr. Gunter Rencken, who is the chairman of the LTS Board of Directors has appealed to the Synodical Council – just as we from the Church Council of the LCSA did nearly two years ago – not to cancel their helpful services, but rather continue with this to strengthen our joint commitment for one Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. Dr. Rencken has officially requested that the FELSiSA affirm their original secondment of my person to the LCSA which they did more than a decade ago. We are still hopeful that these discussions will prove fruitful and look forward to ongoing cooperation and eventually to the unification of our confessional Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa: FELSiSA and LCSA, which have full church fellowship since the LCSA's inception in 1967 and have lived in more or less close proximity and good neighbourhood all these decades.

PRIORITIES IN MISSION

Being an active member of MLC together with our sister-church the FELSiSA we are looking beyond our immediate confines and together support works of Lutheran mission in Southern Africa and hopefully

globally too. We have officially requested missionaries from the LCMS and other partners in mission for at least five high priority mission areas and are still hopeful that these will be answered positively. People interested to bring the gospel to those, who don't believe in him yet and are in Church fellowship with us are encouraged by us to cooperate with us in the MLC so that we will evangelize, practice gospel outreach, strengthen the Lutheran faith and build Lutheran Churches in confessional unity and doctrinal harmony, but not disparately as sectarian enthusiasts tend to do.

In the Church Council we are looking at the following priorities for Lutheran mission outreach in Southern Africa:

- Mpumalanga: Salem and Swaziland
- Gauteng: Student ministry at UP and church planting at Cosmo city
- North-West: Church planting in Rustenburg
- Botswana: Outreach in the Barolong area & consolidation of congregations
- KwaZulu/Natal Vryheid and Newcastle

MISSION FESTIVAL

On Rogate Sunday, the 29th May, our Church celebrated God's wonderful mission in this world at our joint-Mission festival in Salem, Mpumalanga. This was a very joyous occasion as even some visitors from Botswana were present. The next Mission festival of this sort is planned for Kantate Sunday, the 28th April in the Gauteng diocese for 2013. As part of these celebrations we are looking at the possibility of having the official launch of the Book of Concord in Setswana at the University of Pretoria on the 26th April.

DIACONIA: WORKS OF MERCY

This unity in faithful practice holds true in Diaconia too. Not only in Ntshongweni [KZN]; but also in Salem [Mpumalanga] and in Ramathea [Botswana] we as confessional Lutherans work together in unity to promote works of mercy amongst those, who need it most: Orphans, HIV/Aids patients and unemployed Youth.

To address this serious need for professional help, we are glad that the first deaconess course finished its first leg of training at the LTS in October 2011. 6 deaconesses were blessed for service –Sheila Letlhoale BW – Thulisiwe Bhengu and Thembekile Buthelezi from MP – Nancy Sephai, Maria Matlakala Phogoyane and Esther Mathulwe from NW; after successfully participating in the intensive courses offered by deaconess Grace Rao from LCMS World Relief & Human Care. We are looking forward to that day, when these deaconesses will play a significant role in addressing educational, health, administrative and financial relief needs in our church and in the society at large. Presently the 6 deaconesses are now deployed in the various

dioceses to work together with the respective pastors under the supervision of the deans to investigate better and more helpful ways to address the challenges facing our Church in the area of Human care and works of mercy.

At the beginning of this year 2012 the first full-time course under the guidance of deaconess Deborah Rockrohr was started at the LTS. Nine women enrolled in this course to be trained as servants and helping hands in the Church addressing issues of works of mercy and “serving at tables”. Only people with a passion to serve will do well in this service.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

In 2004 our Church leadership of that time addressed 9 questions to the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church [SELK] in Germany. In 2009 the Lutheran Church Missions [LKM, Bleckmar] responded after a series of workshops, questionnaires and discussions in their ranks with detailed answers. These are now being looked at carefully in our Church at all levels. Bishop emeritus David Tswaedi DD and Rev. Radikobo Ntsimane were guests hosted at the workshop on “Apartheid and Mission” at the Lutheran Theological Highschool Oberursel i.T. The results of this were published: *“Mission und Apartheid: Ein unentrinnbares Erbe und seine Aufarbeitung durch lutherische Kirchen im südlichen Afrika”* (2012). A brief summary is attached: “The history of mission and Apartheid in South African confessional Lutheran churches – an interdisciplinary anthology by scholars and church officials from Germany, South Africa, and the United States of America.” I hope that every diocese will get a chance to discuss these important issues and that we will be able to come to better terms with our past as we look to the future our God has in store for us. May he grant the necessary insight, forgiveness, peace, reconciliation and healing!

The translation and publication of the F.W. Hopf: “Lutheran Co-responsibility for the Christian witness in Southern Africa” (2011) was sponsored generously by LUCSA. This money was also used to pay for the graduation ceremony last year, when this booklet was presented to the public.

CHURCH RELATIONS AND FELLOWSHIP: FELSISA

Gratefully we acknowledge that our two Churches have come a long way together. Over the past decades our Churches have cooperated in more or less close partnership in the Lutheran mission, in confessional Seminary training of future pastors and in the various aspects of pastoral ministry. Here and there, now and again our unity in the joint Lutheran conviction and practice has been brought to bear – most significantly from shared pulpits and at the Lord’s table, but also in day to day church life – as the dioceses in MP, KZN and GP know from their own positive experience. For many years the realization of this Church fellowship

has been the goal of pastors and missionaries, of congregations and individual members of the Lutheran Church on both sides.

Due to circumstances and experiences this Church fellowship was queried. We as members of the Church Council of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa feel that the time is ripe and that our shared heritage, our common Lutheran confession and conviction, our mutual love, faith and hope as Lutherans in this country and on this continent encourage us to seek full church unity with our brothers and sisters in the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa. We therefore have invited the FELSiSA in 2010 to join with us in one united Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.

CONCLUSION

Dear friends of our Lord Jesus Christ, dear members of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, deans, pastors, missionaries, evangelists, elders, friends, partners and visitors: There are three areas of priorities, which are very much on the front burner of the Church Council. May the living God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – grant his grace and mercy to his holy Christian Church – and also to us as the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa – that we will faithfully think, say and do, what he has called us to think, say and do!

1. Faithful Lutheran worship [*Leitourgia*: Life together in the Church]
 - 1.1. preaching and teaching God's word and Luther's teaching
 - 1.2. administration of the Lord's sacraments according to the Lutheran Agenda
 - 1.3. Confessing and absolving sins
 - 1.4. Using the Lutheran liturgy with psalms [introit], hymns [hymnal] and spiritual songs
 - 1.5. Praying the church prayers in collects, general prayer of the Agenda and using "Rapelang/ Khulekani"
 - 1.6. Participating in co-workers meetings, pastor's conventions, ongoing education and practice Lutheran spirituality
 - 1.7. Training of Lutheran pastors at LTS in Tshwane
2. Hopeful evangelization, mission and outreach (*Marturia*: Inviting outsiders inside)
 - 2.1. Promoting MLC and our missionaries
 - 2.2. reaching out with Luther's teaching to the unchurched in the community
 - 2.3. gathering and instructing people with God's word and Luther's Catechism
 - 2.3.1. Catechising Sunday School children, confirmands and Youth
 - 2.3.2. Marriage counselling before and after weddings
 - 2.3.3. Preparing people for baptism

- 2.4. Planting new churches using the Lutheran Church order as introduction
 - 2.5. Taking care of shut-ins in hospitals, prisons and at home
 - 2.6. Truth & Reconciliation: Addressing hurt and finding a future through God's word
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- 3. Loving works of mercy (*Diaconia*: Doing good to the needy)
 - 3.1. Orphans & widows: housing, schools, day-care centres, support/training
 - 3.2. Poverty relief: Taking care of unemployed and jobless - cattle project
 - 3.3. HIV/Aids & basic health care: Helping to get to hospital and professional care
 - 3.4. Administration & fund-raising
 - 3.5. Education at all levels: Schooling, English proficiency, computer literacy

CONCLUSION:

2010-2012 WAS ANOTHER BLESSED SYNODIAL PERIOD OF GOD'S GRACE, MERCY + GOODNESS. HE HAS KEPT US IN THE TRUE FAITH EVEN IN THE SIGHT OF MUCH SIN AND EVIL IN THE WORLD AROUND US, IN OUR CHURCH AND DAILY LIVES. WE THANK HIM, THE ONE TRUE GOD, THE FATHER, SON AND HOLY SPIRIT FOR PRESERVING US THROUGHOUT AND WE PLEAD THAT HE MAY CONTINUE TO SUSTAIN US IN HIS WAYS OF LOVE, TRUTH AND PEACE NOW AND FOREVER +

“NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD ...” [KOPELO 14; INCWADI YOKUHLABELELA 10]