

News from the bishop's desk. December 2019 - February 2020

Partnership with the Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) and the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD)

From 4-7.11.2019 a Partnership Consultation between EKD and its South-South Partners took place in Dresden. Churches from Brazil, Chile, the Laplata and South Africa participated. We had fruitful discussions on co-operation between the churches as well as possible exchanges of pastor's and youth programmes. The role of the church in a polarized society was discussed. It was noted with great concern that right-wing elements have gained ground in our countries and that political instability is rife.

The VELKD synod took place from 7-9.11.2019. Peace as an integral part of your worship, liturgy and theology where debated.

The EKD synod was held from 10-9.11.2019 in Dresden, Germany. The theme: "The church on its way, seeking justice and peace." Frank debate took place, looking at ways in which the church could engage in initiatives on matters of peace and reconciliation.

<https://www.evangelisch.de/themen/ekd-synode-2019>

Regional Church of Hannover and the Evangelical Lutheran Mission (ELM)

The Desk for Mission celebrated 100 years of service to the church. I was invited to two workshops where I was asked to share on the multi-lingual and multi-cultural congregation and the opportunities the missional habits create in being church. These workshops where very encouraging and of great value.

In Hermannsburg I participated in a meeting of South Africa – German Partnerships between congregations. Such partnerships started during the Apartheid era and in many ways continue as such. The question is: do we want to become part of a network of partnerships between congregations on ELCSA_COD, Hannover and us? – It could become a wonderful way of learning from and with each other of what it means to be church here and now.

Please let me know what your thoughts are on this matter?

United Evangelical Church in Southern Africa (UELCSA)

a. UELCSA will gather for its synod from 8-10.5.2020 in Namibia.

b. Rutendo Gora will start her studies at the Faculty of Theology in Stellenbosch. We wish her and the other students a blessed year 2020.

Retirement of Pastors

a. Pastor Wolf von Kilian has retired at the end of September 2019. We thank him and his wife for the work done in the Southern Cape congregation.

They have moved to Milnerton. May this phase in your life be a blessed time filled with much joy and laughter.

b. Pastor Peter Molchin, who currently serves the Germiston congregation in Gauteng will retire at the end of February. We thank him and his wife for the many years of service in the Cape Church.

Bible Society of South Africa is 200 years old.

The Bible Society is designating 2020 as a Year of the Bible. The theme for the year is The Bible: Hope for all. Our country needs hope, and as we know the message of the Bible is about living Hope.

To help churches to engage with the Bible anew, the Bible Society offers the following tools for congregations:

- The Bible: Hope for all, a free booklet highlighting the value of the Bible, the unique character and content of the Bible, how the Bible came about, how to read the Bible and much more. This will be available from early January 2020.
- A Bible Reading Plan to help people to read through the Bible in one year, available from early January 2020.
- A series of ecumenical sermon outlines. The sermons are focussing on the Bible and hope for all. We pray that among these outlines ministers will find at least one sermon that will help them to bring the message of the Bible and hope to their congregations during this special Year of the Bible. This collection of sermon outlines will be available in electronic format during January 2020.
- A 40-day Bible study for the congregation. This study will be available in the third quarter of the year and more information will be sent timeously.
- Bible 2020 – a global Bible reading initiative making use of an app whereby people record themselves reading daily passages in their own languages (see www.bible2020.org).

Bishop Gilbert Filter