

1                                    **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church)**

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3                                    2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Meeting of the XV<sup>th</sup> Synod  
4                                    Sionsheuvel Gemeente, Philippi  
5                                    29-31 October 2021

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7                                    **Listening and discerning on being church here and now**

8                                    Refection and report by Bishop  
9

10 Honourable Synod Delegates and Guests, dear Sisters and Brothers,  
11 gathering for a synod meeting is an expression of the willingness to seek answers together  
12 to the ever-important question: what does it mean to be church here and now, more? This  
13 question has gained new impetus through the pandemic and Lockdown situation, as being  
14 church as usual changed almost overnight. Though it's core function and purpose remain  
15 the same, there are different ways of expression.

16 A key aspect for our deliberation here, and in the congregations, remains twofold. One  
17 aspect has to do with the question of what the church of the future will be like, and the  
18 other with the matters related to the future of the church. 'Church of the future' and 'Future  
19 of the Church' are closely knit aspects and we focus on them, as we discern by asking:  
20 what is God's preferred future for the Cape Church? Let us be bold and courageous in  
21 being church.

22 We find ourselves living under the restrictions of the Lockdown due to the pandemic for  
23 almost two years now. This has brought many uncertainties with it for many spheres of  
24 life, society, business and church.

25 Have we been using this time wisely and creatively to look, with a discerning heart, at the  
26 DNA of the Cape Church as an institution? What have we rediscovered by looking back  
27 and asking the question: what usable past is there for the future of the Cape Church?  
28 What are the signs that give us hope? What encourages us?

29 We have always been a small church with a focus on a minority group. Are we able to  
30 overcome the label "Unwanted" that has been given to us many decades ago in the Border  
31 area? How far have we come with the desire to be church in the community where God  
32 has placed us?

33 So, where are we at now? Where to now?

34  
35 In June this year I have acquired a piece of art with the title: "Destiny".



36 What do you see?

37 What strikes you a first glance?  
38 There are many constant elements: the tracks, the railway sleepers, the brackets, the  
39 stones, the sun.  
40 What could they possibly mean?  
41 Some thoughts:  
42 The **rail track** leads to a destination.  
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57 The Basic article of our Constitution (a100) reminds us of what keeps us on the tracks or  
58 on track. "The ELCSA (Cape Church) is founded on Holy Scripture, consisting of the Old  
59 and New Testament, as the revealed Word of God and as the only norm and guide for  
60 faith and life. It testifies its faith by means of the three Creeds of the ancient Church and  
61 by means of the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church." And art 3.1 "The  
62 ELCSA (Cape Church) bears witness to the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to  
63 Christians and non-Christians, by means of the true preaching of the Word of God, by  
64 administering the Sacraments according to Scripture and by practicing Christian charity."  
65 **The sleepers** are  
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68 **The brackets**  
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70 **The stones**  
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74 The long **brown grass**  
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79 **The sun.**  
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81 **The sunset.**  
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84 . What is God up to?  
85 **The sky** is hazy.  
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The light in midst of the haziness is an invitation to let go and to let God. Trust that God is there, even if it is not that clear.

**The fields** are all around us.

**The colour brown.** The soil is

Equip the workers.

**The color green.** Green shows growth.

Due to the Covid pandemic and Lockdown restrictions the way forward and the future seem to be misty and foggy, but the destiny, our purpose and calling as church remains clear: to share the good news of salvation with the people around us. Therefore, many innovative ways have been found to be church and reach out to the members who struggled in loneliness and isolation. It was wonderful to experience how quickly we have adapted to use the virtual possibilities to serve, connect and care. Virtual services, daily devotions, ZOOM, WhatsApp, email, YouTube, Facebook, all are used to connect and to share the Gospel. Ways were found to build and sustain relationships. Small groups were formed to keep in touch, stay informed and to pray for each other. We should be wary of becoming too content with the way we do it now and think that it will remain the same, but we need to continue to look for more and sustainable ways to reach out, serve and connect with loving-care.

In which way will these tools remain part of the way we serve if and when the circumstances change and more physical contact is possible? Research shows that 34% of people have indicated that they will probably not come back to in-person services as they have found a different and more convenient way to be spiritually fed. Even more people have said that the way they used to participate is no longer meeting their expectations and desire for being church. Are we willing and able to adapt in being church with and for the people? How much are denominational boundaries still relevant and important?

Let us keep on asking and probing with the question: what has changed and continues to change even during this period?

The pandemic and the Lockdown has revealed strengths and shortcomings in our being church here and now. It seems that it has been an opportunity for some obvious shortcomings to be exposed. Routines, habits, traditions that used to be core are questioned or maybe even ignored. People no longer go to church just because they used to, but they need to find a new connection to the local church.

Do we see it as an opportunity for a missional acceleration in congregational life by exploring and digging deeper into the missional principles, a journey we are on? Do we still focus on them, or are we too busy to fight the Covid challenge?

Do you recall the missional habits? Do they still appear on the agenda of Church Committee and Annual General Meetings?

**Dwelling in the Word** is a way of giving (new) orientation to our way of doing things.

**Dwelling in the World.** We seek those we need to meet. How does the pandemic impact this habit? Do we reach new people? How do we connect with those who reconnect through the virtual platform?

136 It is encouraging to hear from various congregations that members have come back  
137 from the fringes and connect again! Will they take the next step by connecting  
138 beyond the virtual platform?

139 **Spiritual Discernment.** How do we consider actions together, listening for God in  
140 the process? What is God saying to us as local church? What is our calling under  
141 these circumstances? Do we connect to build them up spiritually?

142 **Focus on Missional Action.** Instead of getting busy to do everything, we need to  
143 ask: where are we heading? How is God moving? How can we catch God's Gust in  
144 our sails and be visible out there through caring and sharing?

145 **Announcing the Kingdom.** We practice noticing God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit at  
146 work in the world. We learn to tell stories about it, as we see the Kingdom of God  
147 visible near us. How do we do that during the pandemic, including reaching out to  
148 others?

149 **Hospitality.** We often make the church into a hospitable home where we belong and  
150 feel at home. This is not wrong, but we need to create more than that. We need to  
151 create safe spaces for forming Christian community, including strangers. It is about  
152 hosting a stranger and being hosted by a stranger. How do we do that under these  
153 circumstances and challenges of the pandemic and Lockdown?  
154

155 **Visitations** play an important role in the process of listening and discernment. Spending  
156 time sharing and seeking answers to the crucial question of what it means to be church  
157 here and now is vital. Unfortunately these did not take place since the end of 2019. It is  
158 not only the pandemic that caused us not coming together but there was a hesitancy to  
159 meet. Some congregations felt that either it was not necessary yet, or that the 4 year cycle  
160 until the next visitation is too short. May I remind you that a visitation is not an investigation,  
161 but rather an opportunity to reflect and discern, with a group from outside the  
162 congregation, on what the challenges and opportunities of the congregation are. I hope  
163 that we can start these visitations soon again. Will you be willing to have a hybrid of in-  
164 person and virtual visitations?  
165

166 Some congregations invited me to join in virtual Church Committee meetings. In this way  
167 I could not only hear of what is happening, but also engage by listening and discerning  
168 together. I wish more congregations would have invited me to walk with them by listening  
169 and being able to understand better what your challenges are, as well as, celebrating the  
170 new opportunities the pandemic has presented in being church with you.  
171

172 ZOOM meetings with Chairpersons of Church Committees took place. These were  
173 encouraging, although only a third of the chairpersons participated. It was a wonderful  
174 opportunity to reach out and to get to know each other and encourage one another.  
175 Knowing what is happening in the neighbouring congregations and learning from each  
176 other is beneficial. Praying together and for each other is a wonderful support structure.  
177 The lack of attendance was disheartening to some and they too decided not to continue.  
178 Was it only due to virtual fatigue?  
179 How can we become more interested in what we are doing so that we can celebrate  
180 together more regularly?  
181

182 The ZOOM meetings with the Treasurers was beneficial and encouraging as most  
183 participated. The aim was to listen to one another and to get an understanding of the  
184 needs of the different congregations. It was a good learning experience as good practices

185 where shared. How can we continue with such a forum? Is this something the Finance  
186 Committee should become more active in?

187

188 Church is about people, God's people. How can we be better equipped to fulfil our calling?

189

190 **Desks – a way forward.** The synod in 2019 tasked Church Council to evaluate the structure  
191 of the Desks. The structure of the Desks was implemented by the synod in 2009 with the aim  
192 to assist the church office in its role to oversee these important aspects of church life.

193 Deliberations on this led us to the following: i. the Desks are seen as Ministries. ii. They  
194 become 3 ministries: a) Woman, Men & Youth Ministry. This would cover/oversee gender  
195 and generational ministries. b) Diaconal Ministry. This would oversee both the serving  
196 needs in the congregation and the outreaches into the community. c) Pastoral Ministries.  
197 This ministry will oversee the Children's, Youth, Caring ministries and the Equipping the  
198 Saints and Preacher Training. d) Legal Desk. Our orders recommend that Church Council  
199 appoints a legal person to advise us when needed. e) Communications Desk. Could this  
200 be part of the responsibility of secretary in the church office?

201 For these ministries to be functional and effective on grassroots level the synod delegates  
202 are tasked to become involved in a ministry with its sub-ministries. The ministries are to  
203 give feedback to Church Council and the next synod session. The Communications Desk  
204 will share the necessary information with the congregations.

205 The reflection on the importance of the ministries for the whole church has once again  
206 highlighted a disappointing reality that information shared does not always reach the  
207 congregants. How can we change this culture of being satisfied with just what is happening  
208 in the local congregation without seeing the need and benefit of the bigger church body?  
209 By just keeping to the small circle we miss out on the many gifts that can enrich the whole  
210 Body of Christ. On a larger scale of being church this becomes visible in the benefits of  
211 being actively part in the ecumenical body.

212

213 **Equipping the Saints, continuous training and training of Preachers** is and remains  
214 an all-important ministry of the church. This ministry should regain a strong focus.  
215 Equipping should happen as part of the ministry of the congregations, on Circuit and  
216 Church level.

217 The pandemic has brought with it its challenges to actively fulfil this ministry, but it also  
218 opened new possibilities of virtual training. Some courses have been offered, but much  
219 more needs to happen on a regular basis.

220 The curriculum for the Training of Preachers has been agreed upon by the Pastors  
221 Convocation, which met earlier this week. The course will be offered from 2022, and  
222 candidates will have to complete 8 modules, which will be offered over a period of 2 years.  
223 Assignments and self-study material will form a part of the equipping. Virtual courses for  
224 continuous training for the preachers will be offered. More information will be shared.

225 Two of our laity have been invited by the EKD to participate in a Preacher training course.  
226 This is offered over a year, with some face to face sessions in Germany. It will take place  
227 in the German language. I am looking forward to the feedback and how that could be built  
228 into our training program.

229 Courses to Equip the Saints will be offered and dates and invitations will be sent out  
230 timeously. It would be helpful if the members share the topics or areas where equipping  
231 is needed. Would the equipping that is happening here at synod with Mrs Hannah Kotze  
232 be something needed to equip and encourage others?

233 EKKLESIA, an ecumenical forum which is linked to the Stellenbosch University, has  
234 embarked on a drive to establish courses to equip laity, as the pandemic has highlighted  
235 once again the important role of the ministry of the laity. Linking it to the Faculty of  
236 Theology would give us access to resources that will be beneficial. Embarking on this  
237 journey together means that we learn with and from one another.  
238 May I remind the Preachers that the appointment is for three years and can be renewed  
239 at the recommendation of the Church Committee (Order c300).

241 **Outreach and Diaconal Projects**. Reaching out to the communities, in which we are  
242 located, is an essential part in who we are as Church. Church is the people who care and  
243 share the word and share in kind what God has entrusted to us. Are we good Stewards of  
244 what God has entrusted to us?

245 **St Lukes Feeding Scheme** is our project. We initiated it at synod in 2019. Touched by  
246 the testimony and involvement of Mrs Thami Bakumeni, we boldly accepted the invitation  
247 to serve that community through their structures. We appreciate and commend the St  
248 Andrews congregation who have taken the task to manage the project. Let us not leave  
249 them on their own, but give support to Mrs Bettina du Buson and Pastor H-P von Fintel  
250 and their team. A report is shared.

251 **The Food Voucher System** is in operation since May 2020. Initially we worked through  
252 the NGO 'The Warehouse', but now we share these vouchers through the Shoprite  
253 system. The recipients are mainly nominated by ELCSA-COD congregations and a few  
254 from our own congregations. They receive a R400,00 SMS voucher. Initially 50 vouchers  
255 per week were distributed. Currently we share 10 vouchers weekly. We have shared more  
256 than 1250 vouchers. This project will come to an end in the near future due to lack of  
257 funding, as funding fatigue has set in. I have mentioned the funders in another section.  
258 We greatly appreciate their generosity.

259 I trust that as Cape Church we will be able to make more resources available to continue  
260 to assist those in need in partnership with organisations in the communities where they  
261 live.

262 **Soup Kitchens** are part of the ministry of a number of congregations. It is a necessary  
263 intervention during these desperate time. The meal shared by these soup kitchens is for  
264 many the only meal that they will have for the day. The question though remains: what  
265 can we do to assist these communities to start projects that will put food on the tables  
266 frequently and sustainably? We need to teach and equip them how and not just fill empty  
267 stomachs.

268 The Paarl Soup Kitchen Project, which is linked to the Friedrich Schweitzer Kinderheim  
269 Trust (FSK) has grown during the pandemic, due to a group of dedicated people and with  
270 the help of the funding received from the ELM. Since the Paarl-East congregation  
271 (ELCSA-COD) became involved, the possibilities of doing more than sharing food, are  
272 there. Once the pandemic allows more activity these can be pursued.

273 **Friedenskirche** in Port Elizabeth has two outreach projects. i. The Winter Warmer Project  
274 and ii. The Food Parcel Project. The heart that the members have for the people in need in  
275 the community is shown through these serving initiatives. Touching lives with love and care  
276 makes a difference and brings hope.

277 Together with the own funding and people involved, the funds received from the ELM for the  
278 first project and from the LWF for the second, makes these projects viable and sustainable.

279 **Various big and small projects** do exist in the congregations. How can we find a more  
280 effective way for sharing an insight in these projects, so that we can rejoice together and learn  
281 from each other?

282  
283 The church is also an organization. It cannot “be” or “do” without dedicated people like  
284 you. Leadership structures play an important role in governance and in giving guidance,  
285 so that the structures remain functional and fulfil their purpose. Thank you to all who take  
286 leadership responsibility, be it as service helpers, liturgists, preachers, small group  
287 leaders, fundraising and maintenance committees, church committees, church council  
288 and the pastors. I thank you for your dedication, commitment and many hours of service.  
289 Let us remain to be servant leaders where we have been called and tasked to lead. During  
290 the past year roles had to be re-defined, re-imagined or re-orientated due to the pandemic.  
291 The challenge often is on how to fulfil the new and different role the church finds itself in  
292 serving society outside of the known structures and systems.

293  
294 Let us spend a moment of silence and prayer, remembering those who have passed away  
295 since our last synod.

296 We remember our brothers in Christ: Pastor (em) Gerhard Plüddemann, who served as  
297 pastor of various congregation and at the St Johannisheim, passed away on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of  
298 April 2021. Mr Alfred Rix, longstanding delegate of the Wynberg congregation, who  
299 passed away on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2020. Mr Dudley Malgas, longstanding delegate  
300 of ELC Strand Street passed away on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2020. May the Lord comfort  
301 their families and fill all with the hope of the resurrection of the dead. Pastor (em) Oziel  
302 Campos de Oliveira, a pastor from Brazil who served the St Crucis congregation, passed  
303 away on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2021. Mr Willie Schultz, longstanding delegate of the Sionsheuvel  
304 gemeente Philippi, who passed away on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June 2021.

### 305 **Pastoral posts**

#### 306 i) New appointments

307 a. Pastor Schalk Treurnicht, who studied theology in Stellenbosch as a student of the  
308 Dutch Reformed Church, completed the colloquium on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 2020. He was  
309 elected by the Church of the Cross (Kreuzkirche) congregation in Bellville and inducted  
310 as pastor on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2020 and is appointed for a 3 year term. He is learning  
311 German through Goethe Institute and making good progress.

312 b. Pastor Frank Schütte started his ministry at St Crucis in Beacon Bay on the 1<sup>st</sup> of  
313 December 2020. Moving and starting to work during the pandemic was not easy but he  
314 has settled in well.

315 c. Pastor (em) Gideon van der Watt, a retired Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) minister,  
316 has been appointed as pastor of the St Paulus congregation, Bloemfontein from the of 1<sup>st</sup>  
317 January 2021 until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2023. We are grateful that the DRC has seconded  
318 him for this period. May he and the members of the congregation serve to the glory of God  
319 with their many talents and gifts.

320 d. Dr Ronell Bezuidenhout, a Dutch Reformed Church minister, has been employed on a  
321 fixed short-term contract from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021 until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2021 as the  
322 pastor of the Southern Cape congregation, Rondevleihoogte, on a 50% post. She has  
323 expressed the desire to become a pastor of the Cape Church and for that purpose she  
324 will take part in a colloquium on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. A colloquium is a  
325 conversation by means of which we together discern whether she will be comfortable in  
326 serving as an ordained Lutheran pastor, according to the central teachings and doctrines  
327 of the Lutheran church. If an agreement is reached she will be offered a contract for a  
328 50% post.

#### 329 ii) End of service in the Cape Church.

330

331 a. Pastor Martha Weich has resigned as pastor of Inland Parish as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of September  
332 2021. At her request she has been put on Leave of Absence. We thank her for her  
333 dedicated service and wish her God's richest blessing for the future.

334 b. Pastor Walter Schwär went on pension on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2021. We thank him for  
335 his dedicated service in various congregations. We wish him God's richest blessing for a  
336 well-deserved retirement.

337 iii) Extended contracts

338 a. Pastor Felix Meylahn's contract with the Stellenbosch-Somerset West congregation has  
339 been extended until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2023.

340 b. Pastor HP von Fintel's contract with the Coastal Parish has been extended until the 30<sup>th</sup>  
341 of June 2023

342 c. Pastor Anja Spiske's contract with the Friedenskirche congregation in Port Elizabeth for  
343 a 60% post has been agreed upon from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2021 until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December  
344 2023.

345 d. Pastor Michael Denner's contract has been extended by the EKD for another 3-years  
346 until the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2023.

347 iv) Vacancies

348 a. ELC Strand Street has been vacant since the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2020. Pastor Schalk  
349 Treurnicht was the locum tenens until the end of August 2021. Under his guidance the  
350 Church Committee made use of this time to discuss and define their purpose and aims for  
351 the future. It was a fruitful exercise and served as a tool to advertise the post. The process  
352 of electing a pastor is in full swing and the election should be concluded soon.

353 b. The Inland Parish which consists of the congregations of St John's in King Williams  
354 Town, St Paul's in Stutterheim and St Paul's in Macleantown, have been vacant since the  
355 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020. Bishop Gilbert Filter is the locum tenens. With the help of Pastor H-  
356 P von Fintel and Pastor Frank Schütte the congregations are served well.

357 A short term agreement has been reached with a retired Anglican priest to assist for 3  
358 months until the end of 2021.

359 The Parish council together with Church Council are seeking to obtain the services of a  
360 retired pastor who would be willing to serve for up to two years. This would give the  
361 congregations time to work towards being in a financial viable situation to employ a fulltime  
362 pastor.

363 c. St Johannis in Worcester, is a small, close knit community. Bishop Gilbert Filter is the  
364 locum tenens. With the help of Pastor (em) Arthur Becker we have been able to celebrate  
365 a Sunday service once a month in Worcester.

366

367 **Pastors serving in congregations**

368

369 Circuit Conference East

370 **Pastor Frank Schütte** of the **St Crucis** congregation in **Beacon Bay**.

371 **Pastor Hans-Peter von Fintel** of the **Coastal Parish** which consists of **St Andrews (East**  
372 **London), Luther Brakfontein and St. Peter's (Komga)**.

373 **Pastor Gideon van der Watt** of the **St Paulus Congregation in Bloemfontein**

374 **Pastor Gilbert Filter** is Locum tenens for the **Inland Parish** which consist of **St Paul's in**  
375 **Stutterheim, St John's in King Williams Town and St Paul's in Macleantown**.

376 **Pastor Anja Spiske** of the, **Friedenskirche in Port Elizabeth**.

377

378 **Circuit Conference West (CCW)**

379 **Pastor Gilbert Filter** is Locum tenens for the **ELC Strand Street in Cape Town**

380 **Pastor Claudia Nolte-Schamm** of the **St Martini congregation in Cape Town**.



381 **Pastor Michael Denner** of the Sionsheuvel gemeente in **Philippi** and the **St. Johannis**  
382 **congregation in Wynberg**

383 **Pastor Schalk Treurnicht** of the **Church of the Cross in Bellville.**

384 **Pastor Felix Meylahn** of the **Stellenbosch / Somerset West** congregation.

385 **Dr. Ronell Bezuidenhout** of the **Southern Cape** congregation in Rondevleihoogte.

386

387 As ELCSA (Cape Church) we are part of a bigger body, a body from whom we can learn  
388 and benefit much. In engaging with them, they too learn from us as we witness together  
389 to God's glory.

390

391 The **Lutheran World Federation** is a world-wide body that represents more than 70  
392 million members who have communion of pulpit and altar. <https://www.lutheranworld.org/>  
393 The pandemic has had a devastating effect of communities and the church worldwide. As  
394 part of its response the Rapid Covid Response Fund was created. We received 5000  
395 Euros for the St Luke's Covid Feeding Scheme. A report has been shared. The  
396 Friedenskirche, Port Elizabeth, has received funding for their "Winter Warmer Project",  
397 through which they have provided school children with uniforms and shoes. I wish more  
398 congregations would have made use of this funding opportunity in order to reach out with  
399 love and care into the community in which you are.

400 Rev. Anne Burghardt from the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church has been  
401 appointed as the new General Secretary. We wish her God's richest blessing in leading  
402 the organisation.

403 We bid farewell to the outgoing General Secretary Rev Martin Junge from the  
404 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile, and thank him for his dedicated service.

405

406 The **Lutheran Communion of Southern Africa (LUCSA)** is the Lutheran Communion in  
407 Southern Africa (LUCSA) is a sub-regional expression of the Lutheran World Federation,  
408 working to serve 15 member churches in 10 southern African countries through  
409 reconciliation, transformation and empowerment; for holistic, relevant and contextual  
410 mission in word and deed to achieve peace and justice in church and society.

411 Rev Dr David Tswaedi has retired as Executive Director. We thank him for his leadership  
412 and always accepting the invitation to synod.

413 Rev Lilana Kasper, from ELCSA, has been appointed as the Executive Director. We  
414 congratulate her and wish her wisdom to lead the organisation during these challenging  
415 times. The Lockdown and pandemic situation has not made it easy for her, as she was  
416 not able to visit the member churches due to travel restrictions.

417 The organisation is dependent on overseas partners for funding. Due to the many  
418 demands and needs world-wide it is noticeable that funding fatigue is increasing. So the  
419 question does arise for how long such organisations will be able to continue. One of the  
420 challenges is that the member churches themselves depend on donations from their  
421 members to do their ministry work, and are therefore are not able to fund such an  
422 organisation beyond their membership fee.

423 Bishop Filter is part of the leadership team of LUCSA and serves as chair of PETER  
424 (Program for Christian Education, Theology and Ecumenism)

425 Dr Ziyanda Mgugudo-Sello from Strand Street and Mrs Diana Krause, from St Crucis,  
426 represent us on WICAS, the Women's Association.

427 Mrs Diana Krause will represent us at the Council, which meets in November 2021.

428 Mr Kabelo Mashile, from Strand Street, represents us on the Youth Desk.

429

430 The **Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)** will have their synod from 5-10  
431 November 2021. Only delegates have been invited. May it be a blessed meeting.

432 OKR Frank Kopania, the head of the department responsible for congregations outside of  
433 Germany and OKR Marc Reusch, from the desk for Africa, have visited us in Cape Town on  
434 19-20 October 2021. The aim was to inform themselves of the situation and needs of the Cape  
435 Church. Filling a pastor's post in 2023, after the departure of Pastor Michael Denner, is under  
436 discussion. A condition for that post is that some congregational work is done in the German  
437 language.

438 The leaders of the partner churches of the EKD from the southern hemisphere regularly met  
439 for South-South virtual meetings. It is a wonderful opportunity to encourage one another and  
440 to learn from one another. The Lutheran churches in the Southern American countries were  
441 mostly established by German settlers, therefore there are many similarities.

442 A Connecting South Exchange initiative has been established for the youth of the partner  
443 churches. It has grown into a wonderful platform on which the youth share their vision and  
444 hopes for the Lutheran church.

445 The **United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD)** is linked to the  
446 German National Committee (the German sub-region of the LWF). They develop  
447 liturgical material for worship and related theological reflection. The material is mostly  
448 produced in German, but some key literature is available in English. For more  
449 information see <https://www.velkd.de>. Their synod will take place from 4-5 November  
450 2021.

451 They are supporting the second phase of the St Luke's project with a donation of 5000  
452 Euro. We are grateful for the support on various levels.

453 Rev Dr. Christine Keim is the representative for Africa and has sent a word of greeting.  
454 She will soon leave the organisation to fill a post in her home church. We thank her for her  
455 support and many visits.

456

457 We have a partnership with the **Regional Church of Hanover**. Their leadership has  
458 always shows a keen interest in what is happening in the congregations and in our region.  
459 During the pandemic Bishop Ralf Meister has phoned on a number of occasions to  
460 express his support and encouragement.

461 Rev Dirk Stelter is the new representative for our region. Good contact has been  
462 established with him.

463 They continue to assist 4 NGO's financially through an annual grant. In this way we are  
464 able to be more involved in our region.

465

466 The „**Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionswerk in Niedersachsen**“ (ELM)

467 The term of office for Rev Michael Schultheiss, as the representative for Southern Africa,  
468 has ended. We thank him for his keen interest in our projects and for regularly finding  
469 donations for us. His support is highly valued. Rev Dr Joachim Luedemann has been  
470 appointed as his successor. He resides in Durban. We are looking forward working  
471 together and finding more ways of being church with and for the people around us.

472 Projects for which we have received funding are: The Voucher Project, The Paarl Soup  
473 Kitchen and The Food Parcel Project of the Friedenskirche in Port Elizabeth.

474 Regular virtual meetings with ELM, ELCSA and NELCSA were initiated with the aim to  
475 build closer relationships and to encourage one another.

476 Regular virtual meetings were arranged by Rev Kurt Herrera, the representative for  
477 Southern American partners and international ecumenical relations. The Partner churches

478 are from Siberia, Southern America and Southern Africa. These are an encouraging and  
479 wonderful opportunity to learn from each other. Sharing training resources and virtual  
480 workshops could be beneficial for equipping the laity.

481  
482 The **Conventus of Reformational Churches** has not met formally since 2018 due to the  
483 pandemic, but the organisers still keep in contact. It is important that this forum continues,  
484 so that the ecumenical relations are strengthened.

485  
486 The **South African Council of Churches (SACC)** is playing an important role during the  
487 pandemic. It has been beneficial to be a part of this platform to debate, draft policies and  
488 create resources with regards to dealing with the Covid pandemic. Clear and helpful  
489 guidelines were drawn up for congregational use. This required many virtual meetings, at  
490 the beginning a weekly 3 - 4 hour meeting.

491 The SACC has been a good mouthpiece for the church, actively, critically and purposefully  
492 engaging with government. For some of our members the approach was regarded as too  
493 conservative, but during the peak of the pandemic the guidelines highlighted the  
494 importance of taking responsibility for the neighbour too, and encouraged responsible  
495 living.

496 At the height of the pandemic the SACC embarked on an active drive to alleviate poverty.  
497 Once it became clear that the Department of Social Works would not make many  
498 resources available to the church to distribute food parcels, the Food Voucher drive was  
499 started. Distributing food vouchers was regarded as more dignifying than food parcels, as  
500 it allowed the recipients to buy what they needed most. It was also a way to avoid conflict  
501 in communities if some households received parcels and others not.

502 The document, “#The South Africa we pray4”, which expressess the core of what the  
503 challenges are we are dealing with as a society and church, is still an applicable and  
504 helpful resource. It is available on our webpage.

505  
506 The **Western Province Council of Churches (WPCC)**, the regional expression of the  
507 SACC, has been revived. After an initial struggle to get its members on board and dealing  
508 with a financial deficit, it seems to have found its place and way to serve in the region. We  
509 trust that it soon will become a clearer mouthpiece for the region on national level.

510  
511 A close cooperation with the **National Church Leaders Forum (NCLF)** helps us to have  
512 a good insight and overview of vital matters church and society are concerned with. This  
513 platform only met virtually and at times in conjunction with the SACC meetings.

514  
515 The importance of ecumenical bodies like the **Western Cape Ecumenical Network**  
516 (WCEN) have been highlighted during the pandemic. Facing the challenges together and  
517 sharing resources, makes the presence of the church more visible in the communities that  
518 needs encouragement and guidance. It is a platform through which the church engages  
519 with the city structures, Western Cape Government and business. Much ground has been  
520 covered in dealing with regards to the matters of the homeless, unemployed, skills training  
521 and many more aspects of concern.

522 I am currently a member of the executive, dealing closely with the above matters. It is time  
523 consuming as there are so many matters that need the church’s attention and action, but it is  
524 rewarding.

525

526 The **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA)**. At our previous synod  
527 we congratulated Bishop Ubane on his election as bishop of the Western Diocese.  
528 Working together with him was good. It is with a sad heart that I have to report that he has  
529 passed away.

530 Our sister church has, for the first time, elected a female bishop. Bishop Naledzani  
531 Sikhwari is the bishop of the Northern diocese. All seven diocese now have a bishop. May  
532 the Lord bless the work of His church.

533 On 13.10.2021 the ELCSA and UELCSA bishops met virtually with Rev Dr Elieshi  
534 Mungure of the LWF as facilitator. The aim of this meeting was to pave a way forward for  
535 theological education in the region. Since the collapse of the Lutheran Theological Institute  
536 (LTI) at the University of KwaZulu Natal, despite of numerous attempts from the side of  
537 UELCSA, no fruitful discussions have taken place. As per mutual agreement in 2014,  
538 UELCSA has been training its students at Stellenbosch University.

539

540 We find ourselves in the same geographical area as **ELCSA-COD**. The pandemic and  
541 related challenges have put a damper on possible joint initiatives to work towards closer  
542 co-operations. Let us keep on actively pursuing possibilities where we can work closer  
543 together on local level. Let us keep looking to where is it possible to partner with one of  
544 their congregations so that we can be church together with the people? Could the  
545 envisaged idea of a Lutheran Hub become a model for the future?

546

547 The **Moravian Church in South Africa** remains an important partner in the ecumenical  
548 body. Due to the pandemic and the disruptions caused by the Lockdown not much could  
549 happen jointly during the past two years.

550

551 The **Lutheran Co-ordinating Committee (LCC)** is a body that unites us with the ELCSA-  
552 COD and the Moravian Church since the 1980's. The **iThemba Labantu** Diaconic Project  
553 is a great joint project. Together we make a difference in a society where the needs are  
554 great in terms of schooling, skills training and job creation.

555 **Pastor Otto Kohlstock** has reached a pensionable age, but he has agreed to continue  
556 serving as director until the end of 2024. We thank the Berlin Mission society for permitting  
557 him to do so. We thank him for the dedication, love and care with which they serve in that  
558 community.

559 Circumstances in the area around iThemba Labantu are challenging and at times the  
560 situation becomes dangerous for the employees and children. Crime and gangsterism are  
561 flourishing in that area, yet the iThemba Labantu remains a beacon of hope. Let us pray  
562 for the community.

563

564 We are a member of the **United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa**  
565 **(UELCSA)**, together with the **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (GELC)** and the  
566 **Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa (NELCSA)**. The synod  
567 took place on a virtual platform on 19 and 20 February 2021. The Church Council was  
568 elected: Burgert Brand as presiding bishop; Gilbert Filter as deputy; Horst Mueller as  
569 additional member; Mrs Bettina du Buson as president of synod and Mrs Brigitte von Fintel  
570 as treasurer.

571 Theological training remains a key focus and task. UELCSA has been accepted as  
572 member of the Faculty of Theology at the Stellenbosch University and as a member of the  
573 Ecumenical Council. Through these structures we have a say in the appointment of  
574 lecturers and are able to actively engage with the lecturers regarding the curriculum. We

575 have been invited to submit modules based on Lutheran theology to be accredited and  
576 included in the syllabus. This requires funding and resources. The Church Council is  
577 seeking funding from the LWF and EKD.

578 We have 5 students that are studying at the Stellenbosch University. Pastor Felix Meylahn  
579 has been appointed as mentor to the students. He actively participates in the Seminarium  
580 program by equipping the students for fulltime ministry with a focus on their spiritual  
581 formation.

582  
583 The **ELCiN(GELC)** is led by Bishop Burgert Brand. They had their synod from 16-19  
584 September 2021 in Windhoek. Members of the Church council were elected. The  
585 pandemic and Lockdown brought with it many challenges and also opportunities in being  
586 church.

587  
588 The ELCSA(N-T) changed their name to **Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church in**  
589 **South Africa (NELCSA)** at their synod in 2019. It is led by Bishop Horst Müller. Their  
590 synod, which will be an elective synod, has been postponed until October 2022. On 9  
591 October 2021, during a virtual synod session the budget was presented and adopted.

592  
593 In conclusion.

594 I thank all of you for your contribution and innovative ways of being church with and for  
595 the people in the regions where the Lord has blessed us with wonderful facilities and many  
596 other resources. Let us continue to be good and faithful stewards of what has been  
597 entrusted to us.

598  
599 Yours in Christ  
600 Gilbert Filter