

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

2
3 2nd Ordinary Meeting of the XVth Synod
4 Sionsheuvel Gemeente, Philippi
5 29-31 October 2021
6

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? This
13 question has gained new impetus through the pandemic and Lockdown situation, as being
14 church as usual changed almost overnight. But it's core function and purpose remain the
15 same, and there are different ways of expression.

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

21 Let us be bold and courageous in being church.

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

25 Have we been using this time wisely and creatively to look at the DNA of the Cape Church
26 as an institution? What have we rediscovered by looking back and asking the question:
27 what usable past is there for the future of the Cape Church? What are the signs that give
28 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 in the Border area many
31 decades ago? How far have we come with the desire to be church in the community where
32 God 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 elements: the tracks, the railway sleepers, the brackets, the stones, the
39 sun.
40 What could they possibly mean?
41 Some thoughts
42 The **rail track** leads to a destination. It does not matter from which direction you come,
43 the destiny remains the same. Depending on the angle or direction I look at it, the
44 starting point changes, but the destination remains the same.
45 God is the author of our destiny.
46 The tracks lead to the destination. With a destination ahead, we can be on a journey.
47 Through the prophet Jeremiah God says: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares
48 the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah
49 29:11).
50 By God's grace our destiny is eternity, as it is with Him. Unto His promise we cling, even
51 now during these challenging times.
52 The tracks are strong and able to carry a heavy weight. "Cast your **burden** on the LORD,
53 and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved." (Psalm 55:22)
54 God carries the burden of our sin on the cross. "For the word of the cross is folly to those
55 who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians
56 1:18)
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 large, heavy beams that support the rails of the track. To me these beams
66 are the congregations. The congregations carry in essence of what it means to be the Body
67 of Christ in this corruptible world.
68 **The brackets** that hold the sleepers in place and hold the tracks on the sleepers are the
69 leaders, the leadership structures and the ministries.
70 **The stones** do not only fill the gap between the sleepers, but its function is to prevent soil
71 erosion. The gravel stones are the individual members. Without them erosion takes place and
72 no stability will be provided to carry the church.
73 There is space and a need for more to be added.
74 The long **brown grass** on the borders remind me of the fringes of the congregational life.
75 Some members have moved to the side. Will they come back? Or, will they disappear beyond
76 the border into the world further and further away?
77 **The colours** are striking. The sunset. The clouds. The fields.
78 The church is a beautiful bouquet of diversity.
79 **The sun**. Christ is the light of the world. He gives perspective. He brings hope in midst of all
80 the haziness in life. He is ever-present, even during the darkness of life.
81 **The sunset**. The work for the day has ended. Has it been accomplished? What has been left
82 undone? What should we have done differently? Dusk has come. It is time to reflect. It is time
83 to lay it to rest. The night sets in, time to rest. Then the day breaks in. A new day is coming
84 and with it come new opportunities to be church. What is God up to today?
85 **The sky** is hazy. It is misty, as it is not always clear what is coming and what we are to
86 do. The troubles in this world bring haziness and seem to dim the light: trauma during the

87 pandemic; loss of loved ones; Gender Based Violence; corruption; crime, poverty,
88 unemployment and much, much more in life.

89 The light in midst of the haziness is an invitation to let go and to let God. Trust that God is
90 there, even if it is not clear. Our God is a faithful God.

91 **The fields** are all around us. They are different in colour.

92 **The colour brown.** The soil is fertile, ready to be prepared. There is potential for growth.
93 The harvest is ripe. Workers are needed to bring in the harvest. Equip the workers.

94 **The color green.** Green shows growth. There is hope. The work has not been
95 accomplished yet. The calling it is ongoing.

96 God is on the journey with His church. He keeps us on track. – Destiny!

97

98 Due to the Covid pandemic and Lockdown restrictions the way forward and the future
99 seem to be misty and foggy, but the destiny, our purpose and calling as church remains

100 clear: to share the good news of salvation with the people around us. Therefore, many
101 innovative ways have been found to be church and reach out to the members who

102 struggled in loneliness and isolation. It was wonderful to experience how quickly we have
103 adapted to use the virtual possibilities to serve, connect and care. Virtual services, daily

104 devotions, ZOOM, WhatsApp, email, YouTube, Facebook, all are used to connect and to
105 share the Gospel. Ways were found to build and sustain relationships. Small groups were

106 formed to keep in touch, stay informed and to pray for each other. We should be wary of
107 becoming too content with the way we do it now and think that it will remain the same, but

108 we need to continue to look for more and sustainable ways to reach out, serve and connect
109 with loving-care. Let us reimagine Church!

110

111 In which way will these tools remain part of the way we serve if and when the
112 circumstances change and more physical contact is possible? Research shows that 34%

113 of people have indicated that they will probably not come back to in-person services as
114 they have found a different and more convenient way to be spiritually fed. Even more

115 people have said that the way they used to participate is no longer meeting their
116 expectations and desire for being church. Are we willing and able to adapt in being church

117 with and for the people? How much are denominational boundaries still relevant and
118 important?

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

121 The pandemic and the Lockdown has revealed strengths and shortcomings in our being
122 church here and now. It seems that it has been an opportunity for some obvious

123 shortcomings to be exposed. Routines, habits, traditions that used to be core are
124 questioned or maybe even ignored. People no longer go to church just because they used

125 to, but they need to find a new connection to the local church.

126 Do we see it as an opportunity for a missional acceleration in congregational life by
127 exploring and digging deeper into the missional principles, a journey we are on? Do we

128 still focus on these principles, or are we too busy to fight the Covid challenge?
129

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

132 **Dwelling in the Word** is a way of giving (new) orientation to our way of doing things.
133 **Dwelling in the World.** We seek those we need to meet. How does the pandemic

134 impact this habit? Do we reach new people? How do we connect with those who
135 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 and 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).

240

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 3rd of
298 April 2021. Mr Alfred Rix, longstanding delegate of the Wynberg congregation, who
299 passed away on the 10th of September 2020. Mr Dudley Malgas, longstanding delegate
300 of ELC Strand Street passed away on the 20th 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 5th of April 2021. Mr Willie Schultz, longstanding delegate of the Sionsheuvel
304 gemeente Philippi, who passed away on the 23rd 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 20th of May 2020. He was
309 elected by the Church of the Cross (Kreuzkirche) congregation in Bellville and inducted
310 as pastor on the 16th 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 1st 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 1st
317 January 2021 until the 31st 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 1st of July 2021 until the 31st 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 18th 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 1st 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 28th 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 31st of December 2023.

340 b. Pastor HP von Fintel's contract with the Coastal Parish has been extended until the 30th
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 1st of January 2021 until the 31st of December
344 2023.

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

347 iv) Vacancies

348 a. ELC Strand Street has been vacant since the 1st 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 1st 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 Mgunudo-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