

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

2
3 1st Ordinary Meeting of the XVIth Synod
4 St Crusis, Beacon Bay
5 12-14 October 2023
6

7 **Seeing, 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 in Christ,
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? We have
13 come through the pandemic by God's grace, realizing that being church brings with it new
14 opportunities and new challenges. Despite of the changed situation, we discover in
15 different circumstances that the church's core function and purpose remains the same.
16 We are called and sent to go out into the world, and make disciples of Jesus Christ (Mat
17 28). Being church means being the Body of Christ with and for the people.

18 The watchword for 2023 assures us that God knows, He sees what His children are
19 experiencing, and how we are doing in everyday life as individuals and as His body, the
20 church. Like with Hagar, God **sees how we** are and where we find ourselves. We too have
21 many a reason to say with Hagar: **"You are a God of seeing."** – Then she proclaims: "Truly
22 I have seen him who looks after me." (**Genesis 16:13**) – God sees and God cares. That is
23 what we experience in everyday life and as church. It is by God's grace that we are who
24 we are. **It is by His grace that we are here and that we have hope for the future in midst**
25 **of and despite of the concerns we have and the challenges we are facing**

26
27 In order to get a better understanding of where we find ourselves at as congregations and
28 as Cape Church, we have commissioned EKKLESIA, which is linked to the Faculty of
29 Theology at the Stellenbosch University, to do a survey on Intergenerational Ministry in
30 the congregations. The report is based on our own experiences we shared. These
31 perspectives have given us a deeper understanding of our 'here and now', our reality as
32 congregations. Are you surprised about the report? Or, maybe even shocked? Are there
33 statements with which you disagree? We will have an opportunity to discuss the report
34 here at synod and then continue with the conversation in the congregations.

35 This is where we are now - at least that is what we said, that is how we experience
36 congregational life and the life of the Cape Church.

37
38 Let us not forget, that it is God's church. Let us ask, probe and discern where He is taking
39 His church through what we are experiencing and seeing. What is God up to with His
40 church?

41 His church is alive in and through you. God sees and works in and through His church, he
42 works though you and me, His children, members of His body. God sees His church as it
43 is now. Be it, that a congregation is big, small, rural or urban, all are His church here and
44 now.

45 Do we see where and how God is at work in the midst of all our doing, serving and
46 anxieties? Are we willing to follow new ways, trusting that he sees and leads us?

47 The report reminds us, that God sees through your and my eyes. God knows in what he
48 sees through us His church.

49 God also sees through those who live in the communities where we are based as
50 congregations as we are called and sent to be His body right there. What do they see?
51 Do they see a living, active, caring and serving Body of Christ? Or, maybe not much more
52 than a building which opens its doors on a Sunday morning? Do they see God's loving
53 care though our caring for them? Do they see what Hagar saw, saying: "Truly I have seen
54 him who looks after me."
55

56 I repeat what I said two years ago: a key aspect for our deliberation here at synod, and in
57 the congregations, remains twofold. The one has to do with the question of what the
58 church of the future will be like, and the other with the matters related to the future of the
59 church. 'Church of the future' and 'Future of the Church' are closely knit aspects of being
60 church. It is important that we understand who we are being church with and for.

61 Our membership lists are more than names and numbers, as they remind us with whom
62 we are church. Gaining a better understanding of the intergenerational composition of our
63 congregations will help us to be more focused in being church, as we listen and together
64 seek ways of being church of the future.

65 It is important that we have some youth members amongst us, who will share with us how
66 they see the future of the church and in the process share with us their hopes and dreams
67 of the church of the future.
68

69 Let us be bold and courageous in being church and see what God is doing for us and
70 through us, His church.
71

72 Visitations play an important role in the process of seeing, listening and discerning
73 together. Visiting each other to see and experience being church under different and
74 sometimes specific circumstances is a wonderful learning experience for the whole
75 church. Due to the aftereffects of the pandemic, not all visitations could take place as they
76 were postponed at the request of the congregations. We urgently need regular
77 opportunities to engage, empower and support each other. This becomes clear from the
78 survey. There is no need for any congregation to soldier on, on their own. We are one in
79 Christ and need to express that, also in and through the institutional structures by reaching
80 out to each other and helping one another.

81 How can the Circuit structure be utilized more effectively in this regard? How can the
82 CCE and CCW structure bring the congregations closer in their region and create a need
83 to be church together? One step in that direction could be that a member of the Circuit
84 Committee is part of the Visitation Team.
85

86 The 2021 Synod took the decision to establish a structure to co-ordinate the work of the
87 ministries serving in and through the congregations. We acknowledge that the
88 congregation is the most important structure, as it is at grassroots level that the serving
89 happens. In and through the congregational life and activities the church is visible in
90 serving to God's glory.
91

92 Ministries: We acknowledge the value that ministries play and as they are rooted in the
93 life of the local church. It is on the congregational level that a structure is formed to
94 create opportunities for the members to serve and share faith, and a place of support to
95 those who serve in the ministries. It provides a structure of mutual accountability.
96

97 Ministry is about caring for each other. Ministry is done by people, with people, and for

98 people.

99

100 a) The Gender and Generational Ministry is to oversee ministries related to gender
101 questions and matters surrounding generational interaction. Pastor Dr. C Nolte-Schamm
102 and I had initiated a virtual meeting for the congregations to share about gender and
103 generational ministries. The aim was to raise awareness of current gender and
104 generational topics; to raise awareness of what is happening in our congregations in
105 these areas; to create a platform to listen, discuss and share information.
106 Statistics reflecting the different age groups were shared. It was noted with concern that
107 in some congregations certain age groups are underrepresented or not active at all.
108 A biblical reflection highlighted the role of young and old in church life. We need each
109 other. We are church together.

110

111 b) The Diaconal Ministry is to oversee the serving needs in the congregations and the
112 outreaches into the community. Reports on some diaconal ministries have been shared.
113 I encourage you to use the opportunity at this gathering to tell the stories of many other
114 ministries from your context. Tell the stories so that we learn from each other and see
115 what is being done and through that encourage each other to share our faith and love by
116 serving others.

117

118 c) The Pastoral Ministry is to oversee the Children's, Youth and Caring ministries. Here
119 again it is important that we share the stories so that we can learn from each other.
120 Equipping the Saints and Preacher Training is a ministry that has seen steady growth
121 and is empowering the next generation of preachers.

122

123 In 2020 we encouraged each other to celebrate divine services at home. Creatively we
124 prepared and shared ways of worshipping as families at home. Daily devotions, daily
125 prayers, liturgies and bible studies were shared. And now, what now? Are we back to ...
126 what? The 'old normal' is no more, as so much has happened since! So what are we
127 hoping to go back to? What ministries are needed on congregational level so that the
128 people can 'see' church active and alive? How can we encourage and empower each
129 other?

130 Is there a need and willingness to co-ordinate and share experiences on CCW, CCE and
131 synod level?

132 A churchwide structure alone will not do it, as it depends on the ministries to be active in
133 congregations and through congregational life.

134

135 We acknowledge that the post-pandemic time made it difficult to revive, implement and
136 co-ordinate various ministries. We battle to understand how church is or could be post-
137 pandemic. We are not sure about the how, what and when, but let us be church and
138 through that seek to understand what God is doing with, for and through His church (what
139 God is up to).

140

141 The church is also an organization. It cannot "be" or "do" without dedicated people like
142 you. Leadership structures play an important role in governance and in giving guidance,
143 so that the structures remain functional and fulfil their purpose. Thank you to all who take
144 leadership responsibility, be it as service helpers, liturgists, preachers, small group
145 leaders, fundraising and maintenance committees, church committees, church council
146 and the pastors. I thank you for your dedication, commitment and many hours of service.

147

148 Let us continue to be servant leaders there where we have been called and tasked to lead
149 and build the kingdom of God. Due to the challenges and uncertainties posed by the
150 pandemic roles had to be re-defined, re-imagined or re-orientated. The challenge remains
151 on how we are to fulfil the new and different roles the church finds itself in with serving
152 society outside of the known structures and systems. We are in it together, so let us
153 discern together as to 'see' what God sees so that we can follow him and be His body, the
154 church.

155
156 Let us spend a moment of silence and prayer, remembering those who have passed away
157 since our last synod.

158 We remember our brothers in Christ: Pastor (em) Erich Rust who passed away on
159 12.03.2023. He served faithfully in various congregations of UELCSA. May he rest in
160 peace.

161 Pastor Cyril Tessendorf passed away on 31.8.2023. He faithfully served the Strand Street
162 congregation for many years. May he rest in peace.

163

164 Pastoral posts

165 i) New appointments

166 a. Pastor Sybil Chetty was elected as pastor of ELC Strand Street and started her ministry
167 on 01.02.2022. May the people be empowered for ministry and the community be served
168 with love and care though the work done by his people.

169 b. Pastor Michael Denner's appointment as pastor sent by the EKD to serve the
170 Philippi/Wynberg Parish, came to an end on 30.8.2023. We thank the Denner family for
171 their dedicated service during the past 12 years. They have taken a decision to stay in
172 South Africa so that they can continue to serve to God's glory.

173 The parish has elected him as their pastor. He has been appointed in the same pastorate
174 for 3 years from 01.09.2023.

175 ii) End of service in the Cape Church.

176 a. Peter Molchin went on retirement in 2022. We thank him for his many years of service
177 in different congregations. We wish him a blessed retirement.

178 b. Claudia Nolte-Schamm has taken a decision to end her current employment at St
179 Martini on 30.6.2023, so that she can spend more time with her family. We wish them
180 God's richest blessing for the future. We trust that she will return into fulltime ministry
181 again.

182 c. Felix Meylahn has ended his employment as pastor of Friedenskirche, Stellenbosch,
183 on 31.05.2023. He has been employed by UELCSA as Director of Studies to equip and
184 mentor our students studying for fulltime ministry at the Faculty of Theology at
185 Stellenbosch University. He started in this position on 01.06.2023.

186 iii) Extended contracts

187 a. Pastor HP von Fintel's contract with the Costal Parish has been extended until the 30th
188 June 2026.

189 b. Pastor Schalk Treurnicht's contract with Kreuzkirche, Bellville has been extended until
190 01.07.2026. He has registered for a PhD at SU. We wish him much wisdom and
191 endurance on this long journey. May this equip him for continued ministry.

192 iv) Vacancies

193 a. The Inland Parish which consists of the congregations of St John's in King Williams
194 Town, St Paul's in Stutterheim and St Paul's in Macleantown, have been vacant since the
195 1st September 2020. Pastor (em) Gareth Jones, a retired Anglican priest, is serving St
196 John's, King Williams Town, and St Paul's, Macleantown, as locum tenens until February

197 2024. Pastor Frank Schütte is locum tenens for St Paul's, Stutterheim. In this way the
198 congregations are served well. We thank them for their dedicated service. Without the
199 caring service of the Congregational Councils and the Preachers, the situation would be
200 different. A solution needs to be found for the way forward.

201 b. St Martini is served by Pastor (em) Walter Schwär as Locum tenens. The post has been
202 advertised in Germany by the EKD. We hope that the post will be filled by
203 August/September 2024.

204 c. Friedenskirche, Stellenbosch and Somerset Wes are served by Pastor Beate Williard-
205 Bidoli as locum tenens. We continue to look for a pastor to fill the post.

206 d. St Johannis in Worcester, is a small, close knit community. Bishop Gilbert Filter is the
207 locum tenens. With the help of Pastors (em) Arthur Becker and Muriel Kossmann we have
208 been able to celebrate a Sunday service once a month in Worcester.

209

210 Pastors serving in congregations

211

212 Circuit Conference East

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

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

216 Pastor (em) Gideon van der Watt of the St Paulus Congregation in Bloemfontein.

217 Pastor Anja Spiske of the, Friedenskirche in Port Elizabeth.

218

219 Circuit Conference West (CCW)

220 Pastor Michael Denner of the Philippi congregation and St. Johannis in Wynberg.

221 Pastor Schalk Treurnicht of the Church of the Cross in Bellville.

222 Pastor Dr. Ronell Bezuidenhout of the Southern Cape congregation.

223 Pastor Sybil Chetty of ELC Strand Street in Cape Town.

224

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

228

229 The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) is a world-wide body that represents more than 77
230 million members, from 150 churches in 99 countries, who have communion of pulpit and
231 altar. The LWF vision reads: "Liberated by God's grace, a communion in Christ, living and
232 working together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world." The areas of work are to
233 promote justice, peace, reconciliation and dignity for individuals and communities.

234 The LWF defines its Lutheran identity as: "Our identity as Lutherans is rooted in the Bible
235 and our history. Our member church contexts continue to shape our faith, theology and
236 understanding of God's mission."

237 For more see <https://www.lutheranworld.org/>

238 The Assembly of the LWF met from 12-19.09.2023 in Krakow, Poland. The theme was
239 "One Body; one Spirit; one Hope." The study material is available on the churches
240 webpage and online. Reports on the Assembly are available on the LWF webpage.

241 We were presented by Mr Henry Malong (youth), Pastor Ronell Bezuidenhout (female
242 theologian) and Bishop Gilbert Filter (church leader).

243 A report on the assembly has been shared.

244

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

250 Bishop Filter has been requested by LUCSA to again become part of the leadership team
251 of LUCSA and serve as chair of PETER (Program for Christian Education, Theology and
252 Ecumenism) due to the resignation of the elected officer.

253 Mrs Diana Krause (lay female) and Mr Henry Malong (male youth) are our representatives
254 on the Council. We thank them for their active participation, representing us well and
255 engaging in a constructive way so that the voice of the people is heard. The Council will
256 meet from 9-12.04.2024.

257 Pastor Anja Spiske and Mrs Diana Krause participated in the Gender Justice Program.
258 An outcome of the workshop is a book in which the stories of women from our churches
259 are shared. You can read the story of Mrs Bettina du Buson, once it is available on
260 www.lucsa.org

261
262 The Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD) will have their synod from 12-15
263 November 2023 in the city of Ulm. May it be a blessed meeting.

264 After not being able to visit us in 2021, OKR Frank Kopania, the head of the department
265 responsible for congregations outside of Germany and OKR Marc Reusch, from the desk
266 for Africa, visited us in Cape Town in January 2023.

267 We thank the EKD that they had made it possible for Pastor Michael Denner to stay on
268 longer than initially planned.

269 Filling a pastor's post in St Martini in August/September 2024, is under discussion. We
270 trust that a suitable candidate will be found. The EKD has kindly offered us to advertise
271 the post for the Project Post Wynberg/St Martini on their webpage. We hope to find a
272 suitable candidate so that we can commence with the work to reach especially young
273 families, children, youth and young adults living in and around Cape Town.

274 The leaders of the partner churches of the EKD from the southern hemisphere met for
275 South-South virtual meetings. It is a wonderful opportunity to encourage one another and
276 to learn from each other.

277 The Connecting South Exchange initiative to connect youth from the partner churches
278 continues and gives the youth an opportunity to share their views and vision for church.

279 Ms Chundré Filippus, from the Philippi congregation, and a student of theology, has had
280 the opportunity to participate in the Youth Camp of the Lutheran Church in Brazil from 15
281 -25.7.2023. She returned with great enthusiasm and motivation to continue with her
282 studies at Stellenbosch University.

283 The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) is linked to the German
284 National Committee (GNC) (the German sub-region of the LWF). They develop liturgical
285 material for worship and related theological reflection. The material is mostly produced in
286 German, but some key literature is available in English. We encourage you to make use
287 of it. For more information see <https://www.velkd.de>.

288 Their synod will take place from 10-12 November 2023 in the city of Ulm.

289 Rev Dr. Detlev Görig is the representative for Africa. Through his desk we were able to
290 secure a donation for the renovation of the organ at ELC Strandstreet.

291

292 We have a partnership with the Regional Church of Hanover. Their leadership has always
293 shows a keen interest in what is happening in the congregations and in our region.
294 Rev Dirk Stelter, the representative for our region, visited Cape Town from 14-16.02.2023
295 to get a better understanding of our different ministries and church life.
296 We are grateful for their continued financial support so that we are able to assist 4 NGO's
297 financially.
298 Pastors Ronell Bezuidenhout and I were able to participate in a program called "Places of
299 Peace". It took place straight after the LWF Assembly, from 20-25.9.2023. It gave us an
300 opportunity to engage with the co-workers of the 8 Places of Peace, and to understand
301 the challenges society faces to be constructive in peace-making and taking care of
302 migrants, Gender Based Violence, victims of abuse and empowering the saints for
303 responsible living in order to take care of the environment.
304
305 The Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionswerk in Niedersachsen (ELM)
306 Rev Michael Thiel, the Director of the ELM, visited us from on 30.4 and 1.5.2023 as a last
307 visit, as he will be retiring in September 2023. His support and guidance has always been
308 encouraging and empowering.
309 Rev Dr Joachim Lüdemann, the representative for our region, has visited Cape Town
310 twice. It is always fruitful to engage with him. We are looking forward to working together
311 and finding more ways of being church with and for the people around us.
312 Projects for which we have received funding for are: The Paarl Soup Kitchen and The
313 Food Parcel Project of the Friedenskirche in Port Elizabeth.
314 The Partnership Consultation took place from 18-24.06.2022 in Hermannsburg, Germany.
315 9 invited partners could not attend as they did not receive a visa from the Germany
316 Embassy.
317 I tested positive for Covid, although not having any symptoms. So I rested well and could
318 participate in the second half of the conference. The topic: "Let justice flow like water... ."
319 (Amos 5:24) guided us in our deliberations. Subtopics were: 'Justice and Peace'; 'Gender
320 Justice'; 'Climate Justice'. Although the context in which we work on the different
321 continents is so different, we did come to the realisation that the calling is the same, as
322 church is about people who face these same challenges. We all rely on God's guidance,
323 grace and mercy.
324
325 The Conventus of Reformational Churches has not met formally since 2018 due to the
326 pandemic, but the organisers still keep in contact. It is important that this forum continues,
327 so that the ecumenical relations are strengthened. We need each other to voice our
328 concerns and together challenge the authorities were necessary.
329
330 The South African Council of Churches (SACC) has been a good mouthpiece for the
331 church, actively, critically and purposefully engaging with government on many socio-
332 economic matters. The document, "#The South Africa we pray4", which expresses the
333 core of what the challenges are we are dealing with as a society and church, is still an
334 applicable and helpful resource. It is available on our webpage.
335
336 The Western Province Council of Churches (WPCC) is the regional expression of the
337 SACC. We trust that it will be a clear mouthpiece for the region on national level.
338 Pastor Schalk Treurnicht, Mr Raymond Kok and Ms Samantha Kiewit represent us. Pastor
339 Treurnicht is involved in the LEAN's (Local Ecumenical Action Network). The aim of this

340 network is to connect local churches so that they share their expertise and resources in
341 times of need and crisis to respond quickly and effectively. Mr Kok serves in the Gender
342 Desk, and Mrs Kiewit in the Youth desk. We thank them for their involvement.

343
344 A close cooperation with the National Church Leaders Forum (NCLF) helps us to have a
345 good insight and overview of vital matters church and society are concerned with.

346
347 The Western Cape Ecumenical Network (WCEN) place an important role as a network to
348 face socio-political and economic challenges together. We share resources and expertise
349 to make the presence of the church more visible in the communities that need
350 encouragement and guidance.

351 It remains a platform through which the church engages with the city structures, Western
352 Cape Government and local business.

353 Ground has been covered in dealing with the matters of concern for the homeless,
354 unemployed, skills training and many other. There are many matters that need the
355 church's attention and action. The question remains on how and where we can be actively
356 involved in serving those in need and bringing hope to the destitute.

357
358 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA).

359 On 26-27.04.2023 and 22-23.8.2023 the ELCSA, NELCSA and Cape Church bishops met
360 in Bonearo Park. The focus of the first meeting was to get to know each other and to
361 understand the different structures and church cultures.

362 ELCSA consists of 8 diocese, currently with 7 bishops. They have an Episcopal church
363 structure, whereas NELCSA and Cape Church have a Congregational church structure.

364 The second meeting focussed on identifying commonalities and dealing with the matters
365 from the past that need to be addressed so that we can work through them to find a united
366 witness.

367 Theological Education needs more deliberation as to understand the different needs, and
368 to work through the hurts caused by the closure of the Lutheran theological Institute (LTI)
369 at the University of KZN.

370 A facilitated process of Healing of Memories is envisaged so that hurts and the wrong
371 impression of each other can be shared and dealt with so that trust can grow between us.

372 The Lutheran Church is a broken body, with more than 10 splinter groups in our country.
373 Please pray that a constructive way towards unity is found.

374
375 We find ourselves in the same geographical area as ELCSA-COD. Both Church Councils
376 have committed to meet and discuss matters of mutual concern and interest. Some
377 members of the COD will participate in the Preacher Training and the resources of
378 equipping laity will be shared with each other.

379 Let us keep on actively pursuing possibilities where we can work closer together on local
380 level. Let us keep looking to where is it possible to partner with one of their congregations
381 so that we can be church together with the people. Could the envisaged idea of a **Lutheran**

382 **Hub in the Garden route area** become a model for the future in our region?

383
384 The Moravian Church in South Africa (MCSA) remains an important partner in the
385 ecumenical body. Rev Martin Abrahams is the President and Mr Lizwi Mtumtum the vice-
386 president. Since 2020 limited contact and sharing was possible.

387

388 The Lutheran Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) is a body that unites us with the ELCSA-
389 COD and the Moravian Church since the 1980's.

390 The iThemba Labantu Diaconical Project is a great joint project. Together we make a
391 difference in a society where the needs are great in terms of schooling, skills training and
392 job creation.

393 Pastor (em.) Otto Kohlstock has agreed to continue serving as director until the end of
394 February 2025. We thank the Berlin Mission Society for permitting him to do so. We thank
395 him for the dedication, love and care with which they serve that community.

396 Circumstances in the area around iThemba Labantu are challenging and it is dangerous
397 for the employees and children to come to or leave the safe space of the premises. Crime
398 and gangsterism are flourishing in that area, yet iThemba Labantu remains a beacon of
399 hope.

400 The primary school is doing well and the children have a good foundation, which enables
401 them to find a placement in a good high school.

402 Let us continue to support the community in prayer and in kind.

403

404 We are a member of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
405 (UELCSA), together with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (GELC) and the
406 Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa (NELCSA). The members of
407 Church Council are: Burgert Brand as presiding bishop; Gilbert Filter as deputy; Theodor
408 Jäckel as additional ordained member; Mrs Bettina du Buson as president of synod and
409 Mrs Brigitte von Fintel as treasurer.

410 Theological training remains our key focus and task. UELCSA is a member of the Faculty
411 of Theology at the Stellenbosch University and a member of the Ecumenical Board.
412 Through these structures we have a say in the appointment of lecturers and are able to
413 actively engage with the lecturers regarding the curriculum. We have been invited to
414 submit modules based on Lutheran theology to be accredited and included in the syllabus.
415 This requires funding and resources. The Church Council is seeking funding from the LWF
416 and EKD.

417 We have 6 students that are studying at the Stellenbosch University. They are Ms Chundré
418 Filippus (1st Year); Mr Bernhard Schiele (3rd year); Ms Rutendo Gora (4th year); Mr Hans-
419 Christoph Lange (5th year); Mr Tristan Krüger (5th year); Mr Petrus (PJ) Hanekom (5th
420 year).

421 Pastor Felix Meylahn has been appointed as Director of Studies. He is the mentor and
422 tutor to the students. He actively participates in the Seminarium program by equipping the
423 students for fulltime ministry. A focus on their spiritual formation is an important building
424 block for ministry. Currently he is developing modules that focus on Lutheran theology,
425 doctrine and tradition, with the aim that they be accredited by the Stellenbosch University
426 and offered to all students.

427

428 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (GELC) ELCiN(GELC) is led by Bishop
429 Burgert Brand. They had their synod from 28-30.08.2023 in Windhoek. Pastor Frank
430 Schütte was elected as bishop. We congratulate him and the church. Pastor Brand will
431 retire in September 2024.

432 The Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa (NELCSA). At their synod
433 in 2022 Pastor Theodor Jäckel was elected as bishop. We congratulate him on his election
434 and are looking forward to continue working together to God's glory. Their next synod,
435 which will take place on 19-22.October 2023.

436 In conclusion.
437 God sees. God knows where His church finds itself at. He sees and knows our struggles,
438 anxieties and joys. It is in and through the here and now that God is working through us
439 to build His kingdom. So let us continue to ask: Lord, what are you up to, what are you
440 doing for and through us so that your church is visible and serving? Let us be willing to be
441 amazed about His goodness and celebrate being church to His glory.
442
443 I thank all of you for your contribution and innovative ways of being church with and for
444 the people in the regions where the Lord has blessed us with wonderful facilities and many
445 other resources. Let us continue to be good and faithful stewards of what has been
446 entrusted to us.
447
448 Yours in Christ
449 Gilbert Filter