

The Message of the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) Council, held at the eMseni Christian Conference Centre, Johannesburg from the 22nd to 25th of April 2024.

Theme: **“Justice in and through the body of Christ”**

The Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) after the cancellation of the 2023 Council Meeting, gathered at eMseni Christian Conference Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa from the 22nd - 25th of April 2024 under theme **“Justice in and through the body of Christ”**.

We are meeting after the Africa Regional Pre-Assemblies in Nairobi 2023, and The 13th Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Assembly in Krakow - Poland 2023, exploring ways to implement what we have harvested from these gatherings. The first Council meeting, after our own LUCSA 11th Assembly 2022, allowed the Communion to reflect on the progress that has been made on issues that have been identified. The celebration of 10 years of the LWF Gender Justice Policy (2013-2023) was a highlight during the council proceedings.

The Council commenced with an awe-inspiring opening service, after which the LUCSA President, Bishop Kenneth Sibanda, officially opened the meeting in the name of our Triune GOD. Being honoured to host various esteemed Guests and Partners respectively, presentations and fraternal greetings to the communion and her member churches set the tone for discussion and deliberations that would follow. We acknowledge the following guests and partners:

Bishop Pumla Nzimande (Presiding Bishop of Methodist Church in Southern Africa) [Keynote Address]

Rev Heidi Petersen (United Congregational Church in Southern Africa - Chairperson-elect SA Synod) [Bible Study]

Rev. Dr Joachim Lüdemann (Evangelical Lutheran Mission)

Ms. Marja Alastalo and Ms. Marja Stirling (Finish Evangelical Lutheran Mission)

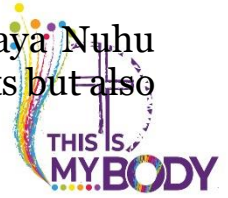
Rev. Dr Benyam Kassahun and Rev. Dr Themba Mkhabela (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America)

Member Churches

Angola: IELA **Botswana:** ELCB, ELCSA-BD, LCSA **Lesotho:** ELCSA-Mission Circuit **Malawi:** ELCM **Mozambique:** IELM **Namibia:** ELCIN, ELCRN, GELC **South Africa:** ELCSA, ELCSA (Cape Church), LCSA, MCSA, NELCSA **Swaziland:** ELCSA-ED **Zambia:** ELCZa, LECA **Zimbabwe:** ELCZ

Executive Director: Rev. L A Kasper

National Bishop Baiguele Jean, Rev. Dr. Mamadou Diouf, and Ing. Ishaya Nuhu (Lutheran Communion in Central and West Africa), who attended as guests but also partners within the African Region.



The address of the LUCSA President, Bishop Kenneth Sibanda, as well as the report of the LUCSA Executive Director, Rev. Lilana Kasper, highlighted the regional context within which the Communion seeks to continue to be a **Communion** committed to God's mission through servanthood, partnership, and sustainability.

Council, through these reports, acknowledged the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and disasters brought about through climate change, the high rates of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide, the unprecedented high levels of youth unemployment, teenage pregnancy and the slow progress made with regards to the upliftment of women and girls in some countries. The increase in HIV and AIDS infections; especially amongst youth, the impact of migration which continues to be seen in sporadic incidences of Xenophobic attacks and Afrophobia.

This, notwithstanding the economic hardships specifically relating to the recent devaluation of the Malawian Kwacha, as well as continued economic exploitation on the larger continent. Council also noted the changes in political leaderships in the region as well as the upcoming elections in South Africa, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, and Namibia. We acknowledge the impact that these issues have on the life and witness of the Church including the financial consequences experienced by our Member Churches.

In this context the Church however continues to exist, celebrate and proclaim the saving grace found in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we recognize new ecclesial leaderships in Member Churches as we continue to pray for upcoming General Assemblies and Synods. LUCSA is deeply grateful for the hard work ordinary members and leaders put in to the work at grassroots level.

We acknowledge the accompaniment and support of our regional and global Partners in building church communities that positively impact the lives and livelihoods of our members.

Council committed itself to:

1. Continued Advocacy and being a Prophetic voice without fear against injustices that underscores the pressing issues faced by all Member Churches which include: the ongoing challenges relating to issues of Climate and Gender

Member Churches

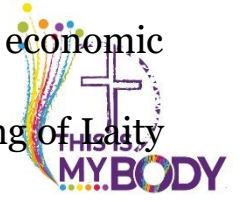
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Justice, HIV and AIDS, violence, and increased poverty due to slow economic growth.

2. Find ways to support Theological Education and continuous training of Laity and Clergy
3. Seek ways with ecumenical partners to alleviate the consequences of Colonialism, Slavery, Apartheid and Corruption that threatens the livelihoods of our peoples.



Council therefore calls on LUCSA member churches to continue:

- To be beacons of hope that must remain steadfast in actions and programmes that bring about justice in and through the Body of Christ.
- To pray for our churches and governments to heed to the signs of the time and seek constructive solutions aimed at peace, reconciliation and justice.
- To acknowledge that all our efforts and aspirations, visible and invisible should reflect God's Grace.

Council 2024 further acknowledged Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (SGBVF) and that it be declared as a pandemic and that Member Churches to act appropriately.



LUCSA Council Meeting 2024 Delegates

In conclusion, LUCSA strives to build capacity for its Member Churches and Society, with Love and Dignity, through Reconciliation, Transformation and Empowerment. It is thus our collective imperative to listen to the signs of the times, heed to the gospel's call of Love and Grace as we work together towards positive change, and, uphold the values of Justice and Equality within the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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