

"Becoming all things to all men ... to save some"

(1 Cor.9:19-23)

SYNODICAL REPORT
to the
59th REGULAR SYNODICAL CONVENTION
of the
FREE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD IN SOUTH AFRICA (FELSISA)

Esteemed Synodical Convention, honoured delegates and guests, dear brothers and sisters.

1. Introduction

Another two years have passed since our last Convention that was held in Greytown in 2012. A highlight was of course the admission of the *Evangelical Lutheran Congregation* (ELC) in Arcadia, Pretoria, as an associate member of the FELSISA. The unanimous decision and the joyful acceptance of the congregation confirmed that the FELSISA is indeed in a transitional phase. From being a Synod to whom in the past almost exclusively people from a European heritage belonged it is slowly becoming a Synod that - according to one of its core values - welcomes and embraces all South Africans irrespective of their ethnic, cultural and social background. Pleasing as it is, it places huge challenges before the Synod. Addressing these challenges hasn't been easy. But facing up to them and reflecting on them *theologically* has been and continues to be an enriching experience through which God shapes his people, as he has done throughout the centuries.

Four years ago the topic of the Synodical Convention was *Works of Kindness* based primarily on Jesus' parable of the *Sheep and the Goats* in Matthew 25:31-47. The reflection revealed, that the parable is not primarily prescriptive, telling us what we should do, but rather descriptive in the sense that it simply *describes* the transformation that takes place in a person's life when he or she has been touched by the grace of God. People touched by the grace of God *are* kind towards others, especially as Jesus says, to the "least of these brothers of mine." This kindness towards others, irrespective of who they are, was identified as the core characteristic that marked the Early Church and doubtlessly contributed to its exponential growth. Little is more attractive and inviting to a struggling world than humble and selfless behaviour, whereby others are regarded more important than oneself, epitomised in the life of Christ himself who always had a heart for the poor and marginalised.

Two years ago the focus fell on *Justification and the Crossing of Boundaries*. Crossing linguistic, cultural and ethnical boundaries has never been easy. As we do today, also the Early Church struggled with this. Our focus fell on the apostle Peter who despite having been in the life-school of Jesus for so many years, broke table fellowship with Gentile Christians in Antioch (Galatians 2). On the surface his withdrawal from table fellowship might have seemed like a minor incident that could be ignored. But it wasn't deemed minor by the apostle Paul. Peter's withdrawal, based on adherence to certain cultural laws and practices that defined the old covenant and his Jewish heritage, called into question the *heart* of the Gospel, namely that we are justified, and thereby accepted by God, by faith in Christ alone (cf Gl.2:15-17). It was noted then already that culture is part of society, and that the Christian faith *will* not only but *may* express itself in the cultural forms that defines a particular

community of people. When however different communities meet, and cultural practices, home to a particular community, are used to justify separation, then both the core doctrine of the Church of Christ and also that of the Lutheran Confessions (CA IV) are rejected. Acceptance that we *all* fall short of the glory of God and are *all* justified, not by observing the law, but by Christ alone, leads to the crossing of conventional boundaries. Such crossing of boundaries, where each one is eager to serve the other with the Gospel of Christ, is a strong testimony of the presence of God's kingdom.

This is the first Synodical Convention where the Synodical Council has invited a keynote speaker, Dr. Mike Rodewald from the *Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LC-MS)*. Apart from the fact that his presentation is to provide a link between the topics of our previous convention and this convention as he talks on *Overcoming cross-cultural barriers in preaching the Gospel*, his invitation also marks a change of purpose. More often than not Synodical Conventions of the FEISISA have revolved almost exclusively around motions that have been tabled with delegates often going home either as winners or loser. The invitation of a keynote speaker, however, highlights and places greater emphasis on *spiritual reflection*. The purpose of a Synodical Convention is not just to get motions accepted or rejected, but to shape the leaders of a church *spiritually* through interaction and dialogue based on Scripture, which according to the constitution of the FEISISA is "the sole source and guiding principle of Faith and Doctrine" (1.1.1.2). Spiritual growth lies at the heart of a convention, which is accompanied by a *celebration* of our faith. We gather here at a Synodical Convention, different congregations of all cultures and language groups, to *celebrate* what we have graciously received through Christ and his Spirit.

2. Spiritual reflection on the topic

"Becoming all things to all men ... to save some" (cf 1 Cor.9:19-23). Contrary to past spiritual reflections, which often included an in-depth exegesis of a particular text, I intent to address this topic in a very broad manner (a sermon on 1 Corinthians 9 is to follow on Sunday).¹

The goal that the apostle Paul pursues, which is indeed the goal of the Church of Christ and therefore also the goal of every FEISISA congregation and member, is "to save some." But the introductory line of this particular passage of Paul "becoming all things to all men (in order to save some)" runs against every human grain. This statement is based on the centrality of *identity* in our human makeup.

We live in a country where identity is often been *threatened*. It is usually threatened by those *in power* who have the means to control the lives of others. Addressing *identity* has therefore

¹ Recognition for this reflection is given, among other, to:

- Cromhout, M. & van Aarde, A.G., 2006, A social-cultural model of Judean ethnicity. A proposal, HTS Theologiese Studies/Teholgoical studies, 62(1):69-101.
- Cromhout, M., 2007, Jesus and Identity. Cascade Books (Wipf & Stock Publishers), Oregon.
- Cromhout, M., 2009, 'Paul's former conduct in the Judean way of life (Gal.1:13... or not?)', HTS Theologiese Studies/Theolgoical studies, 65(1),1-12.
- Cromhout, M., 2011, Die vermyding van etniese spanning en konflik in Suid Afrika: What kan Paulus se ervaring ons leer?, HTS Theologiese Studies/Teholgoical studies, 67(1), 238-245.
- Duling, D., 2008, "Whatever gain I had...": Ethnicity and Paul's self-identification in Philippians 3:5-6, HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological studies, 64(20),700-818
- Nebreda, S.R., 2011, Christ Identity: A social-scientific reading of Philippians 2.5-11, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Göttingen.

always been a hotly debated subject. It formed the focus of many theological discourses during the apartheid years, with a bit of a lull during the initial faces of our newly established democratic dispensation. For a few years South Africans lived the dream of the *rainbow nation* characterised by total equality and justice for all. But for many the dream of a rainbow nation has largely dissipated. Ethnic intolerance seems to be on the rise. Wrongs of the past are being addressed by affirmative actions, quota systems, land claims, race classifications and much more. In themselves these actions can hardly be faulted if they were not accompanied by wide scale corruption and political manoeuvring. The result is that matters of *race* or *ethnicity* is not addressed with the necessary sensitivity, leading to parts of the South African society experiencing a new threat of identity - not least of all amongst the farming community. The Church of Christ (unfortunately) does not remain unaffected. It is therefore not surprising that recent scholarship, in particular in South Africa, have (again) researched the topic of *social identity*, with an effort to understand this phenomenon better so as to council members of the church not to be guided by the political arena that so deeply affects their everyday lives, but the Word of God and the experience of the Early Church as it lived the *new creation* of those joined together by their faith in Christ.

In this short reflection my goal is to see how the apostle Paul overcame the loss of *identity* and used his new found *identity* to promote mission: "Becoming all things to all men... to save some."

It does not suffice to note *that* identity is central to mankind. The question rather is why mankind has *the need* of identity. In other words, why do I have the need to proudly state, "I am a Capetownian, a Shark, a German, a Zulu, a Sotho or English?" The latter is the question widely addressed by *Social Identity Theory* (SIT). SIT highlights three central concepts: (1) categorisation, (2) identification, and (3) comparison.

Categorisation is largely a *natural process*. It simplifies the world around us and helps us to communicate. We thus refer to people as blacks, whites, rich, poor, male, female, African, European, etc. Categorisation as such does not necessarily involve any connotation, positive or negative.

Identification involves the process of people identifying with groups to which they think they belong. Once groups have been identified, people are able to identify with certain characteristics in a particular group that reinforces their belonging. Although this identification can be individual, it is in most cases *corporate*, that is, people tend to think in terms of "us" versus "them", or "we" versus "they". For example, the "city congregations" versus the "rural congregations," the "German speaking congregations" versus the "Afrikaans speaking congregations", the "European culture" versus the "African culture", and so forth. Invariably this accounts for what it is termed *ingroups*, that is, people with whom we identify in a real, concrete way, and *outgroups*, that is, people we understand to be different from us, with whom we do not identify. "I", of course, always belong to the *ingroup*.

The third concept is comparison. Comparison is the result of what seems to be the basic need of every human being for *affirmation*. Identifying with and belonging to a certain group, provides people with a *positive self-concept*, which makes them feel good about themselves. People gain a certain measure of self-esteem and group prestige as they compare themselves with other groups. Theologically the need of affirmation is traced back to original sin. Tainted by sin the human identity is in constant need of self-assurance. This is invariably gained by the tendency to view *outgroups* not only neutrally different, but less positively, called *negative distinctiveness*. In other words, in order to feel better about myself, I choose

what characteristics to highlight in my own group, seen to be favourable, and naturally diminish (or choose to ignore) positive traits in the *outgroup*. Again to provide an example, if I publically highlight my European heritage and state “I am German” then I usually do so to stress the positive traits of Germans, be it orderliness, high work ethic, and self-discipline, hoping that by belonging to his group will provide me with greater prestige. From an *outgroup* perspective, however, that may hardly be the case. The word “German” might evoke ideas of rigidity, resistance to change, lack of humour, or even anti-Semitism.

Needless to say intergroup behaviour invariably leads to *stereotyping* (defined as “an oversimplified mental image of some category of person”) and also *prejudice*. We find one such biblical example in Titus 1:12. In a moment of frustration, Paul writes (formulating rather carefully): “Even one of their own prophets has said, ‘Cretans are *always* liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons’” (italics mine).

Categorisation, labelling and stereotyping have much to do with maintaining *boundaries*, which if muddled could lead to *identity loss*. This partly explains the interesting phenomenon that the finer the difference between two groups (such as Jews and Samaritans who share the same ancestry and both adhere to the *Torah*, the Law of God) the stronger commitment people have to their own groups and the greater is the need to highlight the distinctiveness.

But what characterises the Christian, what forms his or her identity? If the primary identity is informed by language, ethnicity, or customs, then “becoming all things to all men ... to save some” is an unattainable commission, as it indeed was for the apostle Paul before his conversion on the road to Damascus.

Paul’s letters repeatedly reflect the pride he had in his ethnic identity as a Jew, naturally seen to be *better* as all other ethnic groups of his time. To give but two examples, “We who were Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners” (Gl.2:15), and “[C]ircumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church, as for legalistic righteousness, faultless” (Phl.3:5-6). In Paul’s own congregations *ethnic identity* leads to the constant distinction between Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians, or “we” and “them” categorisations, and needless to say, constant squabbles primarily evoked by the Jewish Christians (being the more powerful group) that the Gentiles need to become *like them*, accept *their* laws and customs.

When the apostle Paul, however, encountered Christ there was a radical change. Nowhere is this change better captured as in his letter to the Philippians (3:7-10), following the passage quoted above:

[W]hatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...

For Paul, at least within the Church of Christ, the social game of greater esteem for the Jews above those of the Gentiles belongs to the past. His letters reveal a different *mind-set* and a new understanding of “us” and “them”. “Us” (Jewish *and* Gentile Christians) are now

followers of Christ; “them” are both Jews and Gentiles who as yet do not believe in Christ and his resurrection, but are the goal of Christ’s Great Commission. Paul has a new “inclusive” *ethnos*, a fictive *family*, which supersedes anything he had before.

It is his new found identity *in Christ* that sets Paul *free* to cross the boundary to others. Christian *freedom* is the main line of thought in 1 Corinthians 9. Captive is the person, who expects everybody else to change in order to be accepted into the *family of Christ*. Free is the person, who like Paul, *can* make himself a slave to everyone. To the Jews he can become like a Jew, to win some. To those under the law, he can become like one under the law, to save some. To those not having the law, he can become like one not having the law, to save some, etc. It is *never* about him (and others adapting to his language or customs). It is always about Christ and that some may be saved. That this is indeed the Christian *ethos* is supported by the second century apologetic treatise *Ad Diogentem*, where we read: “For Christians are distinguished from the rest of men neither by country nor by language nor by customs” (*Diog* 5.1).

Especially in his letter to the Philippians Paul promotes a *Christ-identity*. Central is the Christ-Hymn in Philippians 2:5-11, introduced by the line: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” Based on this attitude, the Christians are not to withdraw from their (Roman/Greek) community, as they are called to be a witness of Christ to them. Their witness however is not first and foremost a word-based witness, but that of imitating Christ. The text is revolutionary. Ethnic based values are subverted. The hymn evokes a narrative that is not *power* based (everybody does what I want to), but *self-giving*. It is not based on pride (rooted in one’s own ethnicity), but *humiliation*. *Servanthood, humiliation and considering others higher than yourself* becomes the “badge of membership.” It is this *attitude*, the result of the new found CHRIST- IDENTITY, which the Gospel wishes to promote also within the FELSISA.

As long as the Christ-identity is not central, Paul adopts a radical approach, which basically renders ethnic identity as *irrelevant*. Such is the case in Galatia, where Paul had the rather unpleasant episode with Peter, breaking table fellowship with the Gentile believers. He emphasises (Gl.3:26-29):

You are *all sons of God* through faith in Christ Jesus, for *all* of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

But once this truth has been truly internalized, Paul - in his latter letters - does give room for ethnic diversity within the Church of Christ, leading to what can be termed a *sub-identity*, CHRIST being the *primary* identity. An example of this is Romans 14, where Paul speaks about the *weak* and the *strong*. Some eat only vegetables; others eat everything. Some consider a certain day more sacred than another; others consider every day alike. Some abstain from meat; others eat meat. These practices all relate to culture. Paul allows adherence thereof, as long as the cultural practices do not cause division or separation. Notably those *strong* in faith are the ones that are called upon to accept the other in their cultural practices.

In summary: For the FELSISA to be a missional church that is able to “become all things to all men... to save some”, the formation of a Christ-identity is essential. We live in a country

where there is indeed the threat of identity-loss, a loss that is real and leads understandably to heightened emotions. But within the greater picture of what we have gained in Christ and our new found *primary* identity, that loss is minimal and should not in any way affect what the FELSISA does as a Synod. A Synod that lives the core value “welcoming all” cannot but gain. Where Christ is, there is no loss. He is our identity. He is the one who unites us and sends us into his mission field.

3. Overview of events since the previous Convention

3.1 Resolutions of the last Synodical Convention

3.1.1 Salary administration of Bishop Dr. Weber

The 2012 Synodical report gave an overview of events that culminated in the decision of the Synodical council to terminate the administration of Bishop Weber’s salary at the end of the 2012 financial year, suggesting that the administration is taken over by the *Lutheran Theological Seminary* (LTS) in Tshwane, where Bishop Weber serves as rector. The decision was based primarily on two factors: (1) Since 2003 no agreement stipulating the terms and condition of the salary administration has been in place and all attempts to negotiate such an agreement had been unsuccessful and (2) that with the administration of Bishop Webers salary the FELSISA by default serves as the employer of Bishop Weber. Based on a proposal accepted by the 2012 Synodical Convention the Synodical Council tasked Mr. Herbert Schulz and Mr. Wolfgang Beier to negotiate with representatives from the LTS Board of Directors (BOD) to resolve this issue as a matter of urgency.

Various telephone conferences and meetings were held between these two groups of representatives. The negotiations highlighted the fundamental difference that from the perspective of the FELSISA. the payment of Bishop Weber’s salary was always seen as an *administrative* service provided by the FELSISA for and on behalf of the *Lutheran Church of Southern Africa* (LCSA), who had called Pastor Weber in 2000, and the *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, World Missions* (LC-MS WM), who initially provided a grant to cover Pastor Weber’s salary, and the position of the LTS (BOD) who sought to negotiate an *Employment Contract* for Dr. Weber, whereby he would (continue to) be employed by the FELSISA. When by early March still no agreement was in sight, the Synodical Council informed the LTS BOD that the administration of Bishop Weber’s salary would be terminated at the end of April 2013. Since May 2013 Bishop Weber’s salary is being administered by the LTS. Since the LC-MS stopped to provide directly for Bishop Weber’s salary, his salary has been provided for by funds raised by the LTS.

On request from the LTS BOD Bishop Weber has remained on the Pension Fund of the FELSISA. This was agreed to by the Synodical Council in view of the fact, that negotiations have started to restructure the FELSISA Pension Fund to also allow members of other (partner) churches to join the fund. Once these amendments have been made, not only Bishop Weber, but also other lecturers of the LTS and pastors of the LCSA could join the restructured Pension Fund.

The time and effort put into the negotiations to clarify the position and the administration of Bishop Weber’s salary highlights the necessity to draw up proper *Agreements* and if necessary *Employment Contracts*. The effort put into this by Mr. Herbert Schulz, an attorney by profession, should be noted.

3.1.2 Ecumenical Guidelines

The adopted *Explanations and guidelines for ecumenical encounters* were distributed to all congregations of the FELSISA. It doesn't seem as if these guidelines have led to more ecumenical encounters than before, but the purpose of determining the parameters in which such encounters are to take place are being well served by these guidelines. These guidelines also serve the purpose of creating greater awareness that despite necessary separations from other Christians churches, based on doctrinal differences, it is also necessary to acknowledge and to celebrate *the (one) holy Christian Church* worldwide and the unity that exist based on the three *universal or ecumenical creeds*, namely the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

3.1.3 Amendments to the FELSISA Constitution

All adopted amendments to the FELSISA constitution regarding (1) Language diversity, (2) Life Norms and Values, (3) Language specific motions and (4) Pastoral call were made and an updated constitution was made available to all congregations of the FELSISA. Some pastors in the FELSISA made the effort to work the newly adopted *Life Norms and Values* through with their congregations. This has proved to be a very valuable exercise as these norms and values are indeed intended to serve as a guide for Christian living.

At the 2012 Synodical Convention it was considered whether delegates to Synod could withdraw their names for *election onto the Synodical Council* if compelling reasons are shared with the Bishop before the start of the Convention. As no agreement could be reached on this proposal it was withdrawn by the Synodical Council. After discussing it at various meetings of the Synodical Council it was decided that no new proposal is to be tabled at this Convention.

3.1.4 Admission of the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation (ELC)

The admission of the ELC as an associated member of the FELSISA was already referred to above as a highlight of the 2012 Synodical Convention. The official *Associated Membership Agreement* was signed in Pretoria on 7 October 2012. It is valid for four years. According to this agreement the ELC can participate in all structures of the FELSISA, including the Synodical Convention where it has the right to speak. As an associate member the ELC is exempt from levy payments to the FELSISA, which is done on a voluntarily basis only.

All other resolutions by the 2012 Convention were addressed and will be reported on below. It may be added that the booklet *Core Values, Mission and Vision* of the FELSISA distributed at the last Synodical Convention has been translated into German. An Afrikaans translation has been made, but has not been published yet. Efforts to also translate it into Zulu proved to be too difficult. The FELSISA Bishop explained the core values in short articles that were published regularly in the FELSISA Newsletter.

4. Events in the FELSISA since the previous Synodical Convention

4.1 Work of the Synodical Council

During the 2012 Synodical Convention we bid farewell to Dr. Manfred Johannes who had served the FELSISA faithfully for many years. His decision to stand down from the

Synodical Council was taken as both he and Mr. Herbert Schulz had indicated that they would not serve beyond 2014. Mr. Eckhardt Paul (Panbult) was elected onto the council to complete the term of Dr. Johannes.

Since September 2012 to August 2014 the Synodical Council had 11 meetings. As in the past most meetings were held in various congregations of the FELSISA in order to engage the church councils both on the work done in their own congregations and Synod in general. As always these meetings proved to be valuable. Meetings were held with the church councils of Kirchdorf (x2), Wittenberg (x2), Our Saviour, Panbult/Piet Retief, Greytown and ELF (Randburg) (x2). The Bishop also made effort that his own travels (often together with another lay person serving on the Council) coincided with other meetings to be held, either with other congregations within the FELSISA, individual pastors, the *Mission of Lutheran Churches* (MLC), the *Lutheran Theological Seminary* (LTS) in Thswane as well as other Churches and Church leaders.

The way the Synodical Council engaged and debated a variety of topics was amicable and credit should be given to those serving on the Council. We would like to pay tribute to both lay members on the Synodical Council. Mr Eckhardt Paul has slotted in well. However our heartfelt gratitude is expressed especially towards Mr. Herbert Schulz who served on the Synodical Council for eight years and will be stepping down this year. His professional input as an attorney served the council well. But of even greater value was the insight and the calmness he portrayed during difficult meetings. In fact in many ways Mr. Herbert Schulz became the right hand man of the Bishop and accompanied him on most of his meetings. He will be sorely missed. The day he was elected onto the Synodical Council is well remembered. On the onehand he conveyed his surprise on being elected, expressed his own reservations, but then continued and said: "The one thing I can promise is that my *heart* is in the FELSISA and I am willing to *serve* as well as I can." This Mr. Schulz did tirelessly. His attitude was and continues to be an example for all those who are elected to serve within the FELSISA. It may be added that in those eight years that Mr. Schulz served on the Synodical Council - contrary to the norm - he did not once put in a claim for his travels, despite providing his own car not only for Synodical Council meetings but also for other journeys on which he accompanied the Bishop. We pray for God's continued blessing on his life.

4.2 Pastors' Convention

During the period of this report two Pastors' Conventions were held. The first one was held from 27-31 May 2013 on the farm Impalabos (outside of Hoedspruit). The Convention focussed on the booklet *Values, Mission and Vision* of the FELSISA, which was presented to the Synodical Convention two years ago. Each day a Bible study was presented on one of the *Core Values* of the FELSISA. These Bible studies were then made available to the pastors so that they could be held in all congregations of the FELSISA. The Bible studies were complemented by two mission orientated presentations on *Children and Mission* (Dr. C.W. Winterle) and *Youth and Mission* (Pastor C. Tiedemann). The programme was rounded off by presentations on two topics that have led to diverse views not only amongst our pastors, but confessional Lutheranism worldwide. The one is the use of grape choice during Holy Communion in situations of pastoral care and the other is absolution of pastors by installed church councillors within a public service. The manner in which contrasting views on these topics were presented and debated was heart-warming. The need to continue the debate led to the postponement of these topics to the next pastors' convention. It should be noted that Pastor Nathan Mntambo of the ELC had joined our pastors' Convention for the first time in 2013.

The experience in the Bushvekd, with some good game drives and delicious braais to conclude each day, highlighted the value of having pastors' conventions in a *relaxed atmosphere*. This led to the next pastors' convention being held at Heyshope Dam (between Piet Retief and Panbult) from 18-21 May 2014. Based on questions that had arisen at the 2012 Synodical Church Councillors meeting (see 4.3 below), regarding a more unified practise with regard to exercising pastoral care in administering Holy Communion to guests from other churches, this convention focussed almost exclusively on this topic. Whereas questions raised at the Church Councillors meeting were addressed primarily from a church historical perspective, effort was made at the pastors' convention to first share the practise used by each pastor in his particular context, followed by an exposition of the relevant Scripture passages, especially 1 Corinthians 10 and 11. This led to a lively and insightful debate, not least of all as it highlighted (again) that due to ever-changing context, Scripture is not always absolutely clear or prescriptive on what actions are to be followed in a particular case. Always upholding a clear confession, there is clearly a need for responsible pastoral care *that evaluates each case on its own merit*. In the light of this, *Guidelines for Pastors* were formulated and accepted by the convention to assist them when visitors or guests from other churches approach them to partake in Holy Communion. On request these guidelines, called *Holy Communion and Situations of Pastoral Care: Guidelines for Pastors*, can be obtained from the pastors of the FELSISA, explained, and if needed, refined even further at upcoming conventions. On the one hand an appeal is made to FELSISA members and others to respect that due to differing circumstances, pastoral care can never be performed in an absolute unified manner. On the other hand pastors are requested not to act unilaterally, but being called *by* a congregation, to also engage *that* congregation in obtaining a better understanding on what grounds pastoral care is practised. Needless to say, whereas foundational principals, as captured in the *Fundamental Articles* of the FELSISA constitution, address matters on a Synodical or Church level, pastoral care is about the *individual* and it is about *caring* and making the gifts of God readily available to those in need. An important aspect of pastoral care is that when Christians from other churches wish to partake in Holy Communion effort is made that such a person is informed about the meaning of the sacrament, that is, a clear confession is upheld, and that he or she receives the sacrament as a blessing, that is, good pastoral care is practised.

Pastoral care is, of course, not confined to Christians of *other churches*. In studying 1 Corinthians 11, awareness was raised on the *context* that Paul addressed when dealing with this topic. The unworthy manner in which this sacrament is received, relates to our everyday lives. Realisation that Christ himself is present in the elements of this sacrament and readily shares his grace with unworthy sinners, should lead to forgiving hearts that seek to overcome all strife and divisions that characterise the Church of Christ.

With the focus on Holy Communion, other topics carried over from the previous pastors' convention did not receive the attention needed to reach a conclusion. Further engagement and deliberation is needed.

That being said, in the past two years the Bishop has had the opportunity to visit various congregations be at visitations or when attending funerals. On these occasions he was touched by the preaching of the pastors. It was always wonderful to observe how Christ-orientated the preaching is. The preaching is characterised by a clear understanding of the theology of the cross, which alone provides us with an everlasting comfort. This needs to be gratefully and humbly acknowledged and should overshadow those points of contention with

which we often grapple grabble as we jointly seek the council of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

The need for further education, as we have it in all spheres of business, has often been expressed by the pastors of the FELSISA. Some pastors have been supported financially for specialized courses, mainly at the University of Pretoria. However consideration should also be given to an additional pastors' convention to be held biennially (when there is no Synodical Convention) for training purposes alone. Training in specific areas of the pastoral office, not least of all in missions (a topic easily side-lined when continually dealing with contentious issues) can be done by professionals and active laity, preferably from our partner churches but also local universities. Funding for such *training conferences* should be included in the FELSISA budget.

4.3 Church Councillors Meetings

The Church Councillors meeting held on 9 & 10 November 2012 addressed the topic *Shaping and addressing responsible stewardship in the congregation*. With this topic the Synodical Council hoped to address the motion tabled by Wittenberg congregation on *Effective work distribution*. Despite awareness of Paul's image of the church as a body with many parts, each part playing an essential role in the well-being of the body, the FELSISA has largely remained a *Pastor's Church*, with the pastor often not managing to address the multitude of tasks associated with a congregation. The keynote speaker was Mrs. Mpho Netshiombo, a member of the *Evangelical Lutheran Congregation (ELC)* in Arcadia. She did a very thought-provoking presentation on *Roles, jobs and teams: How to set up an organizational structure for a congregation*. She urged that areas of responsibilities within a congregation are consciously defined and leadership positions are allocated. Notably these leadership positions are not confined to the Church Council, but should include as many people in the congregation based on their particular spiritual gifts. A congregation is only as effective as the totality of its members. Instead of highlighting shortcomings, congregation members are encouraged to consciously seek greater involvement in their congregations, with pastors being encouraged to delegate wherever possible and to enjoy the multitude of gifts God has given to his congregation.

A fruit of the 2012 Church Councillors meeting has been that the deputy Bishop, Pastor Dieter Schnackenberg, was tasked to organise the annual Church Councillors meeting. He in turn sought the involvement of church councillors in determining what topic should be addressed. In 2013 Pastor Schnackenberg engaged the church councillor of the *central region* who identified the need to address the topic of Holy Communion. Questions were gathered and grouped under three headings: (1) Communion and Fellowship, (2) Communion and Confession, and (3) Communion and Pastoral Care. In hindsight it became clear that a single Church Councillors meeting did not suffice to address all items that were tabled. The agenda was too full and although most talks were informative, there was not enough time to address all the questions posed. Various church councillors also noted that in the plenary discussions, often dominated by the pastors, that especially in dealing with situations of pastoral care, there was a notable divergence amongst the pastors of the FELSISA in terms of allowing guests of other churches to partake in Holy Communion. These divergences in pastoral care, in what at times seem to be similar situations, indeed cause confusion amongst the laity. Realisation of this led to the topic of the 2013 pastors' convention (see above 4.2).

For the next Church Councillors meeting, Pastor Schnackenberg intends to engage the *northern region* in determining the topic.

4.4 Synodical Finances

4.4.1 New Treasurer

The financial report will be tabled later during the Synodical Convention by our newly appointed treasurer, Mr. Edmund Böhmer from Wittenberg congregation. Shortly after the 2012 Synodical Convention our long-standing treasurer, Mr. Berno Niebuhr, decided to step down. Unfortunately his intentions were not known during the 2012 Synodical Convention so that we could not acknowledge his dedication and achievements in a fitting manner. A tribute to Mr. Niebuhr was published in the December 2012 FELSISA Newsletter. Herewith we again would like to express our heartfelt gratitude not only for his professional service, but also for his personal input and tireless effort to promote the work of the Church. We pray for God's continued blessing on his life.

Our gratefulness to Mr. Niebuhr for his lengthy service, is shared by our gratefulness to Mr. Edmund Böhmer, who accepted the position of Synodical treasurer. The hand-over was seamless and is a tribute to both men. Mr. Bodo Meyer (Pretoria) serves as the auditor. It is to be acknowledged by Synod - with great gratitude - that both the treasurer and the auditor serve the FELSISA in a honorary position, with no compensation for their work done. This applies to many others who all help the Synodical Council and in particular the Bishop to provide the FELSISA with an excellent service sometimes under huge stress, yet always with a willing heart and a friendly smile.

In recent years Pastor Harry Niebuhr has nearly perfected a spreadsheet for the FELSISA budget, which has helped both the treasurer and the Bishop immensely. On request this spreadsheet is made available to all. It provides not only an excellent overview but also transparency regarding the finances of the FELSISA. The Synodical Council in turn makes great effort to work within the confines of the budget and tries to keep increases to a minimum.

Our thanks is also expressed to the congregations of the FELSISA for paying their Synodical levies timely, often doing so by dipping into their own reserves.

4.4.2 Finance Committee

For a few years the Synodical Council had worked with a finance committee, with a wide representation in Synod and chaired by Dr. Manfred Johannes, to address a number of topics with financial implications. However having such a large committee proved to be impractical and the Synodical Council decided to disband the committee. Having re-prioritised its immediate needs, it was decided that Mr. Wolfgang Beier and Mr. Herbert Schulz should address pension fund related issues, in particular the top-up payment for those pastors who are still part of the defined benefit fund, and Mr. Harald Niebuhr and Mr. Eckhardt Paul should deal with the topic of a new structure of the FELSISA. Both Mr. Niebuhr and Mr. Beier will make presentations at this Synodical Convention. We thank them for their time and input.

4.4.3 Assistance Fund

During the 2012 Synodical Convention various FELSISA funds were consolidated and a motion to establish an *Assistance Fund* was accepted. All moneys from the former FELS Charitable Trust, amounting to just over 3 million Rand, were transferred into the newly

established fund. A financial overview of this fund will form part of the treasurer's financial report.

The Assistance Fund, managed by the Synodical Council, was very active in the past few years. The newly accepted constitution of the fund restricted the Synodical Council to using only a maximum amount of five percent (5%) of the cumulative net surplus of the fund (that is, of the interest gained). This restriction made it nearly impossible to use the fund to realise *some* of its objectives, such as supporting mission projects of the FELSISA or to provide financial assistance to students of theology or pastors wishing to attend specialised courses. The help provided by the fund was therefore restricted to loans (at 2.5% under prime lending rate) to congregations and pastors. Various pastors requested a loan to finance the purchase of a new vehicle. Three congregations also requested a loan: (1) Vryheid congregation for the renovation of their church building, (2) the *Evangelical Lutheran Fellowship* (ELF) to purchase a parsonage in Randburg after the house next to the church was placed on auction, and (3) the *Evangelical Lutheran Congregation* (ELC) to purchase a flat in Pretoria, also intended as a parsonage for the congregation. For all of these loans *Loan Agreements* were signed and in the case of the parsonages also *Covering Mortgage Bonds*. In short this means that although the buildings are registered in the names of the congregations, the FELSISA is the Mortgagee and can reposes the property should the loans not be repaid.

The management of the Assistance Fund has proved to be very time consuming, both for the Bishop and Mr. Herbert Schulz who served as conveyancer (again without charging any fees) - hence the proposal to hand over the management of the fund to a Management Committee (MANCO). The help of Mr. Udo Schulz, who prepares the amortisation schedules and provides regular reports both to the Synodical Council and to the lenders, is noted with gratitude.

Apart from generating money through loans, the Synodical Council soon realised that other means needed to be found to generate income for the assistance fund. As a result a regular notice was placed in the FELSISA Newsletter that reads *The FELSISA has an Assistance Fund* (with the banking details of the FELSISA provided). Although a R50,000.00 donation was received at the beginning of this year (2014) from one FELSISA congregation, the fund remains in need of further funding if it wishes to serve its objectives.

4.4.4 “FELSISA” Trust

Amongst the members of the Synodical Council there is a growing awareness that should the FELSISA wish to fulfil the Great Commission of the Lord more effectively, it needs greater funding over and beyond what is provided by means of the annual budget of the FELSISA. Generally the Synodical Council has tried to keep the budget of the FELSISA inflation bound. This is done for good reasons. Although the FELSISA is blessed with many affluent individuals and some affluent congregations, there are various congregations in the FELSISA that can hardly manage an above inflation hike in the budget. The FELSISA therefore needs to move away from a system where funding of new projects is added to the budget and paid for equally by all. This was largely also the vision of the late Pastor Dr. Helmut Eggers who had started (and largely also funded) the FELS Charitable Trust. It was primarily this fund that made it possible for the FELSISA to establish *St. Thomas congregation* in Cape Town.

On prayerfully pursuing this line of thought as well as considering how the reserves of the FELSISA can be used pro-actively to generate more money two “events” need to be shared: (1) Meeting John Rodewald, who is a business man in service of the *Lutheran Church-*

Missouri Synod, International Missions, at a symposium held in Oberursel, Germany. This meeting has led to the invitation to Mr. Rodewald to present at this Synodical Convention on the topic *How can business support the church in promoting the Kingdom of God?* (2) The desire and initiative of Mr. Andre Voigts as a successful property developer to establish an (independent) Trust with the expressed objective to help the church in its mission. Mr. Voigts will also present at this Convention.

4.4.5 Housing Subsidy, Additional Voluntary Contribution and Housing Facility

During the past two years there was an exchange of thoughts on various matters relating to housing for the pastors. In the FELSISA, parsonages/manses are provided by the congregations for their pastors. With Pastor Martin Paul being single, St. Paul's congregation in Pretoria investigated the possibility of renting out the parsonage and providing its pastor (or pastors) with a housing subsidy in order to purchase an own house. In broad terms (taking all aspects into consideration) it seemed to be a win-win situation in Pretoria. But when the idea was circulated amongst all pastors in the FELSISA to gauge their opinion in diverging contexts (some houses can't be rented out or would have a very low rental income) the idea was dropped, as it would indeed create an unfair financial advantage to some and possibly (subconsciously) influence future calls.

That being said, obtaining an own house only on retirement, remains difficult. As a result the Pension Fund Committee has through Alexander Forbes negotiated an *Additional Voluntary Contribution* (AVC) for their pastors (that is, pastors can increase their pension contribution to above 7.5%), with the possibility, once enough pension capital has been accumulated, to also obtain a housing facility, that is a loan, in order to purchase a property *before* retirement. Such a housing facility is now in place. Rates at 1.15% under prime lending rate have been negotiated with a local bank.

4.5 Associations in the FELSISA

The children, teenage and youth associations all give separate reports to the Synodical Convention. All three associations, in particular the teenage association, had to deal with the question of language, with various meetings held to address the issue. As with the Synodical festivals it is paramount that the language(s) to be used is announced in the invitation. But then again agreement was also reached that pastors may and should feel free to change and adapt their talks based on the composition of those attending the camps. From a Synodical perspective it is important that all members of the FELSISA, with their friends, are made to feel welcome. Boundaries are often overcome, not by addressing the proper *protocol* to be followed, but by a positive and loving *attitude* that focusses on the well-being of the *other*.

Disconcerting has been the use of alcohol at Synodical meetings, in particular the Synodical youth day. For many years the Synodical youth day has been characterised by excessive drinking, which darkens and calls into question the public testimony of the FELSISA. The misuse of alcohol is less at Bible camps, where the focus is unmistakably spiritual and is attended by those who wish to grow in their faith. The purpose and goal of the Synodical youth day however, seems to lack clear definition and direction. In a letter dated 3 June 2013 the Bishop made an appeal to all congregations of the FELSISA to *seriously consider* refraining from the sale of alcohol at Synodical events. This letter caused widespread reaction. On the one hand many positive responses were received both from youth members and parents who have been concerned about the excessive drinking of our youth members, not only at the Synodical youth day, but also at other youth gatherings within the congregations of

the FELSISA. Others were critical of the letter implying, among other, that the Bishop is not well informed. Most concerning is the attitude of some parents, who downplay the topic by (rightly) pointing out that such drinking has *always* been part of the youth day celebrations. The latter however is the very reason why this topic needs to be addressed. Despite the announcement that some alcohol would be made available during the 2014 youth day celebrations and that no misbehaviour would be tolerated, youth members circulated text messages to bring their own drinks. It was no surprise that the youth day celebrations were again marred by excessive drinking, albeit by a small group of people. But this small group should not be allowed to set the tone and turn the youth day into an event that other youth members of the FELSISA no longer wish to attend. Can the youth not plan an enjoyable event without alcohol? And should the assumption (or threat) that many would stay away if no alcohol is made available determine the outcome of this topic? It is time that church councils, parents and youth leaders take a stance and jointly convey the very clear message that misuse of alcohol is *not* the quietly accepted norm in the FELSISA - it is *not* an “in-thing” to drink. The youth day is and should be celebrated as a *spiritual* event to which also friends are invited and drawn to a church where the Gospel message of Christ is central. The Synodical Council has asked the Bishop to address this topic with the youth pastors and youth parents of the FELSISA who clearly share the concerns expressed in this report. The outcome will however largely be determined by the *example* set by parents and other adults in our congregations and the support provided to the youth pastors and parents. As misuse of alcohol is seldom if ever a problem at youth camps, it has been suggested by some that the Synodical youth day should be held in conjunction with these Bible camps culminating in a church service by the youth and for the youth. The Brass Band Festival could then be preceded by a training camp for choir conductors and organists.

The Brass Band festivals that followed the youth days were spiritually uplifting, as always, and praise is due to all those involved in organising this event and participating in the programme. The same can be said about the Synodical Choir festivals. Both of these associations, as well the newly established organist association, report at their respective meetings. The Synodical Council however proposes that these associations also provide the Synodical Convention with a short written report.

It is worth mentioning that in the past few years the (English speaking) congregations of Greytown, Our Saviour (Wartburg), Pietermaritzburg, Durban-Westville and Shelly Beach have celebrated a combined *Mission and Song Festival* annually. This festival (usually the 1st Sunday in August) has proved to be a wonderful event of fellowship and praise to God. It is mentioned here as an encouragement to other regions within Synod to organise similar *regional* events. These events are not a replacement, but a supplement to the Synodical events, which all members of the FELSISA are encouraged to attend, celebrating the unity we have in Christ.

4.6 Missions

4.6.1 Mission of Lutheran Churches (MLC) and other mission activities

Since the FELSISA was invited to serve on the Board of the *Mission of Lutheran Churches* (MLC), the Bishop of the FELSISA has attended the annual meetings of the board regularly. As always the MLC Representative, Rev. Christoph Weber, will give an extensive report at the Synodical Convention.

Although the MLC board meetings have focussed primarily on the deployment of missionaries in South Africa and Botswana, the last two years have increasingly highlighted the manner in which the MLC can serve the FELSISA in its own mission activities. As was the case with Our Saviour Congregation, the MLC was of special help in obtaining a pastor for the ELC, after it was accepted as an associated member of the FELSISA. After the departure of Missionary Axel Wittenberg, the ELC called Rev. Musawendkosi Nathan Mntambo from the LCSA and a lecturer at the LTS to be its pastor. In order to cater for his remuneration (including pension and medical aid) Rev. Mntambo entered into a separate fixed term agreement of three years with the MLC. The ELC in turn reimburses the MLC according to its salary scale for local missionaries. This has worked out well for Rev. Mntambo, the ELC, the FELSISA and the LTS where Rev. Mntambo continues to serve as a lecturer. A *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU) was also been signed on 8 October 2012 between the MLC and the FELSISA defining the status of Rev. Mntambo for the duration of his fixed term contract with the MLC. In 2015 the fixed term contract with the MLC will need to be renegotiated.

In the past few years the FELSISA had also been approached to provide support for two emerging Lutheran Churches. The one is in Malawi, which was visited by Pastor Helmut Straeuli in 2012. Through the help of Pastor Straeuli hymnals have been printed for the church in Malawi. The church is expanding rapidly and is in need of theological training. Funding to put up church structures is also needed. The other one is in Mozambique, where Pastor Dr. Walter Winterle annually teaches a beginner's course in theology called *Theological Education by Extension* (TEE). (Dr Winterle will give a short presentation as part of this report.) The *Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil* is hoping to call a full-time missionary from our partner church in Brazil soon. As the FELSISA sometimes lacks personal and other skills, the MLC is seen as the body to get involved in these projects with the continued support of the FELSISA.

Locally various congregations of the FELSISA have shown great initiative in uplifting neighbouring congregations, especially in the northern Kwazulu-Natal and Southern Mpumalanga region. Creches are being investigated, courses on how to deal with the aids epidemic and financial management courses (as part of the *Lutheran Mission Forum, Mpumalanga*) have been presented. Due to tent ministries and other activities there has also been a great response to the Gospel. In this area FELSISA and ELCSA (N-T) congregations have worked closely together and have jointly provided support. An informative meeting was held with both Bishops. From the FELSISA's perspective this is another area where the MLC can provide leadership and expertise.

Presently the MLC is in the process of drawing up a new constitution, defining its goal and vision, outlining its structure which is to include a wider representation that would involve the active participation of the laity. At some point finances will have to be addressed as the MLC, although active in Southern Africa, is largely being supported by the SELK in Germany.

4.6.2 Student ministry in Pretoria

The student ministry in Pretoria is a dream come true. An additional pastor in Pretoria to serve our youth was a motion tabled by Wittenberg congregation many years ago. With the help of the *Arcadia Lutheran Ministries* (ALM) and the *Mission of Lutheran Churches* (MLC) this dream has become a reality, albeit with a much wider mission outlook than initially envisaged, which makes it even more exciting. Jacob Corzine, from our partner church, the *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, was called and ordained by the FELSISA on 27

April 2014. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed with all partners involved. An initial fixed term contract of service for three years was signed with the MLC, with ALM providing the local oversight. The MLC, *St. Paul's congregation* and the *Evangelical Lutheran Congregation* (all both part of ALM), as well as the Synodical Council on behalf of the FELSISA have made financial commitments towards this ministry. Pastor Jacob Corzine aims to reach students throughout Pretoria, in particular at the University of Pretoria with the Gospel, in the hope that they will find a spiritual home in one of the Lutheran congregations. Some of his work can already be followed on the blog lutheran@up (or visit the website <http://uplutheran.co.za>). A proposal on how to finance this project in future, apart from the financial commitments already made by the two Pretoria congregations and the MLC, is being tabled at this Convention. Presently a garden flat is being rented in Monument Park for Pastor Corzine. It has however already become clear, that a flat very close to the campus would serve the ministry better and provide the pastor with an office and a gathering place easily accessible for the students. Purchasing a flat (instead of paying rent) is a project that should indeed be launched in the near future. The FELSISA carries the hope that this ministry might evolve into a permanent position of a student pastor for the FELSISA. We pray for God's blessing on Pastor Corzine and his ministry amongst the students.

4.6.3 Lutheran Hour Ministries

The Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) has been active in South Africa for many years (See www.lutheran.co.za). Its aim is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ through mass media and personal testimony, and serves as a bridge between the people and the Church. In recent discussions with the local director, Mr. Siza Lugojobo, and the international directors from the LHM, consideration has been given as to how the LHM can provide better support to the churches. At a meeting held in 2014 with the regional director of Africa, Mr. Eric Gates, the vision was shared that the LHM should focus its support in the greater Johannesburg area, possibly the *Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church* in Diepkloof, and in particular the *Student Ministry* in Pretoria. It may be noted that there is a Church Growth Fund in the LHM for this very purpose, the proceeds coming from the FELS Charitable trust, started by the late Dr. Helmuth Eggers.

4.6.4 Themba and LEASA

In view of the motion tabled by the Synodical Council regarding *Recognised Service Organisations* (RSO's) attention is drawn to the *Themba Trust* (based in Dirkie'sdorp) and the *Lutheran Education Association South Africa* (LEASA). Although much can be said about both (with LEASA also been given the opportunity make a presentation as part of this report), the common factor is that of *education* and the realisation of the immense influence that Christian, and in particular Lutheran educators, can have on learners. The goal of the Themba Trust, founded by Missionary Stillfried Niebuhr, is to help the rural poor in South Africa to uplift themselves through access to excellent education and through sharing hope in Christ. LEASA in turn is directly affiliated to the *Lutheran Education Association* (LEA) in the USA where it provides support, among other, to the many Lutheran Schools. So far two conferences were held in South Africa at different venues. It is important that these Non-Profit Organisations (NPO) although independently managed are at least *recognised* by the Lutheran Churches. Education always provides opportunities for sharing the faith, be it by example only.

4.7 Study group on Apartheid

It was already noted that the FELSISA is in a transition phase of becoming a Lutheran Church for *all* people in South Africa. This transition has been made difficult by apartheid policies of the past, which - although never publicly condoned - had a direct influence on the FELSISA. It is a subject that most wish to ignore and declare that it belongs to the past. But fact is that the effects of apartheid have never been dealt with. Dealing with it is of course a complex issue and can indeed cause more harm than good if not dealt with professionally. It is also a topic that is not totally one-sided or confined to South Africa. This is highlighted by the fact that our partner church in the USA, the *Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* (LC-MS), published a booklet in 1994 entitled *Racism and the Church*. This booklet, prepared by its *Commission on Theology and Church Relations* (CTCR), deals with a number of issues, such as *prejudices, paternalism, culture, fear of differences and racism as an ideology*. Racism is indeed a world-wide phenomenon. But blessed are those who have the courage to deal with this phenomenon, seek forgiveness where necessary, and enjoy the freedom and peace that comes through forgiveness and reconciliation.

There is realisation that this topic transcends *racism*. In a positive sense it can only be enriching if more thought goes into the topic of *multiculturalism* and to how the Church of Christ can both live within different cultures, and simultaneously give testimony to the unity in Christ. As apartheid was a government policy that indeed belongs to the past, the study group is considering a different and a more inclusive name for the wide-ranging topics that need to be addressed for the well-being of the church. The keyword for this commission is *scientific and theological professionalism*, that is proper research so that real issues and not purely emotions (based on hear-say) are addressed.

A first meeting, that included members of the *Lutheran Church in Southern Africa* (LCSA), the FELSISA, the *Mission of Lutheran Churches* (MLC) and the *Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church* (SELK) in Germany (the parent body of the Mission in South Africa), took place in Pretoria on 19 March 2012, with a subsequent meeting held on 28 April 2014. Members of the study group are: Bishop em. David Tswaedi (LCSA, secretary), Missionary Christoph Weber (MLC), Mr. Peter Ntshoe (LCSA), Pastor Dieter Schnackenberg (FELSISA), Pastor Matthias Albers (FELSISA) and Prof. Dr. Werner Klän (SELK) serving as the chairperson. Prof Klän brings not only scholarly expertise but also a wealth of experience in dealing with similar issues within the Church after World War II in Germany.

The Synodical Council encourages FELSISA members to see the work of this study group in a positive light. In a letter dated 1 December 2011 the FELSISA Bishop wrote to all congregations of the FELSISA: “[The] burden of broken relationships remains if it finds no expression, is not addressed, confessed and forgiven. As children of God, who continually live in the sphere of God’s gracious forgiveness, this is a journey we gladly embark on.”

4.8 Commemorating 500 years of Reformation

In 2017 the Churches of the Reformation, in particular the Lutheran Church, will be commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Celebrations will be held worldwide, also in Wittenberg Germany, where Luther posted the 95 theses on 17 October 1517. Through the *International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg* (ILSW), the LC-MS together with the SELK and the support of other confessional Lutheran Churches have purchased the old Latin School in Wittenberg, where most probably the celebrations of the *International Lutheran Council* (ILC) will take place. Presently this building, which is to serve as an outreach centre to promote confessional-Lutheran theology, is under reconstruction - termed the *Wittenberg Project*.

The Reformation is also to be commemorated in South Africa. Locally the *Reformed Churches* are looking to the *Lutheran Churches* to provide guidance. The Synodical Council therefore envisages church specific and national celebrations. Wittenberg congregation has proposed to host the annual Brass Band Festival of the FELSISA in 2017. The theme of the festival will focus on Reformation. The Bishop of the FELSISA has in the interim approached the Bishops of the LCSA and the ELCSA (N-T) and proposed that an inter-church committee is put together to commemorate the Reformation in Pretoria, as close to October 2017 as possible. A public symposium could possibly be held on a Saturday with both Lutheran and Reformed theologians presenting on Reformation topics, culminating in a combined Lutheran service the Sunday, in which also the various church choirs could perform. Should these plans be realised, the FELSISA's annual choir festival would form part of these celebrations. It is important that the opportunity is used to raise greater awareness of Lutheranism in South Africa.

By means of regular essays published in the FELSISA Newsletter on the *Book of Concord* (the Lutheran Confessions) and other "Luther-topics," the pastors of the FELSISA also wish to contribute to these celebrations. The publications are intended not only to provide greater insight into Reformation topics, but also to encourage pastors and laity alike to read the Lutheran Confessions.

4.9 FELSISA 125th Anniversary

2017 also marks the 125th anniversary of the FELSISA, founded on 13 September 1892. Based on their historical interest, the Synodical Council has tasked Pastors Karl Böhmer and Roland Johannes to prepare and commemorative volume. This volume is to contain a historical overview of all FELSISA congregations, including their outreach and missionary initiatives. Congregations are requested to assist the two pastors in sourcing the necessary information.

4.10 FELSISA Newsletter and Website

Pastor Michael Ahlers (Kirchdorf), with Pastor Rüdiger Gevers (Vryheid/Newcastle) assisting, is still responsible for the FELSISA Newsletter, published in both English and German. The pastors are to be commended for a well-prepared and informative newsletter, the preparation thereof being very time consuming. There is a need to source more help. As in many other churches, the editor could also be a lay person. Pastor Tobias Ahlers continues to serve as webmaster for the FELSISA website: www.felsisa.org.za.

5. Events in the Congregations

5.1 Pretoria

After receiving a call to serve the *Evangelical Lutheran St. Paul's congregation*, Pretoria, Vicar Martin Paul was ordained in Wittenberg on 12 August 2012. He was installed as Pastor of St. Paul's on 9 September 2013. Since the arrival of Pastor Martin Paul the congregation in Pretoria has been involved in a restructuring process, not only taking the gifting of congregation members and church councillors into consideration, but also those of the pastors. Areas of ministerial responsibilities were identified, prioritised and distributed. (A presentation was also made at the 2012 Synodical Church Councillors meeting in Paulpietersburg). Pastor Damaske however continues to hold all Afrikaans services, with Pastor Paul being responsible for the German services. With the *Evangelical Lutheran*

Congregation (ELC) becoming an associate member of the FELSISA, the focus is no longer on integrating the ELC into St. Paul's as a third language group, but rather on good working relationships between two neighbouring congregations, further enhanced by the continued work of ALM and the newly established Student Ministry in Pretoria.

5.2 Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC)

Since the last Synodical Convention the Bishop has not had the opportunity to visit the EELC in Diepkloof for a Sunday service again, but had two meetings with the executive. At the first meeting much thought was given to the topic on how the congregation as a whole can profit by its associated membership with the FELSISA. This led to the Bishop writing a letter to all the FELSISA congregations in Gauteng. In this letter, dated 30 July 2013, the congregations were encouraged among other, to consider: (1) An annual combined planning session, (2) regular pastor's meetings, (3) pulpit exchanges, (4) annually one combined service, possibly as a *Song and/or Mission Festival*, (4) and a meeting of the ladies associations/leagues. Pastor Damaske was requested to serve as convenor. From the perspective of the Synodical Council it is important that the associated membership of the EELC leads to positive and spiritually enriching experience for the whole congregation and promote the feeling of *belonging*. The second meeting addressed the topic of how to proceed towards full-membership, including the position of Pastor Mabe, who presently serves the congregation on a part-time basis, albeit more recently with the support of a retired LCSA pastor. At that meeting it was decided that the new chairperson of the EELC executive, Mr. Paul Ngamedi, should also be co-opted by Mr. Harald Niebuhr and Mr. Eckhardt Paul on working towards a new structure for the FELSISA.

In July 2014 the Bishop was informed that the decision has been taken by the EELC executive that from May 2015, Pastor George Mabe is indeed to be employed by the EELC on a full-time basis. This is good news, as Pastor Mabe, being a full-time teacher, can hardly serve the congregation as well as he wishes. It also makes his attendance at Pastors' Conventions easier. Negotiations are underway as to how best to include Pastor Mabe in the Medical Aid and Pension of the FELSISA. The full-time employment of Pastor Mabe is just one of the future goals set by the EELC, the others include acquiring a parsonage close to the church and also completing the church hall. The EELC is a congregation with immense potential, led by very capable leaders.

5.3 Christ-Church Kirchdorf and Our Saviour

In 1996 Christ-Church Kirchdorf constituted a branch congregation called *Our Saviour*. In recent years this congregation was served by Missionary Christian Tiedemann. With the agreement between the MLC, *Christ-Church Kirchdorf* and Missionary Tiedemann coming to an end, and Missionary Tiedemann returning to Germany at the end of 2014, the Christ-Church Kirchdorf engaged the Synodical Council on calling a second pastor for *Our Saviour* congregation, similar to St. Paul's in Pretoria. This has led to the proposal for an additional pastor being tabled at the 2014 Synodical Convention.

Since *Our Saviour* was founded it held its Sunday services in a residential home in Wartburg. However in 2012 Christ-Church Kirchdorf purchased the church premises of the *Old Apostolic Church* in Wartburg for *Our Saviour Congregation*. With the ownership of the building being transferred in January 2013, the Church was officially inaugurated by Bishop Reinstorf on 17 February 2013. In 2014 the congregation also acquired the residential home

directly opposite the church as a second parsonage, with renovations and improvements well under way.

We wish Pastor Tiedemann and his wife, Christa-Maria God's blessing as they move to Germany to serve in the SELK and thank them for their service within the FELSISA. Pastor Tiedemann will be missed not only for his ministry at *Our Saviour* but for his tireless input and enthusiasm in serving the mission.

5.4 Vryheid Congregation

After receiving a loan from the Assistance Fund in 2013, the *Evangelical-Lutheran St. Peter's congregation* in Vryheid undertook major improvements to the church. These improvements have greatly enhanced the church building. In 2012 the congregation also acquired a new organ, with the support of Christ-Church Kirchdorf.

5.5 Greytown congregation

With the imminent retirement of Pastor Chris Johannes on 31 October 2014, *the Evangelical-Lutheran St. Peter's congregation* in Greytown will be coming vacant. On 17 August 2014 the congregation called Vicar Heinz Hiestermann as its pastor. We thank Pastor Johannes for his faithful service.

5.7 Kempton Park

The FELSISA has not managed to provide Kempton Park with a new pastor, nor has it been able to source the salary for the deployment of a missionary in the Eastern Suburbs of Johannesburg. After St. Paul's in Pretoria requested that Pastor Damaske should no longer serve as vacancy pastor, this position was taken over by Pastor Tobias Ahlers from ELF (in Randburg) who holds two services in Kempton Park every month.

6. Visitations

In 2013 Bishop Reinstorf made official visitations to the following congregations: (1) Vryheid from 4-5 May 2013, (2) the ELC (Arcadia) 27-28 July 2013, accompanied by Mr. Eckhardt Paul, (3) St Paul's (Fairland, Johannesburg) 14-15 September 2013, and (4) Lüneburg 22-23 March 2014, accompanied by Mr. Herbert Schulz. These visitations proved to be valuable and generally more visitations and/or visits by the Bishop (where he would preach and make presentations) would serve Synod well, but is largely restricted to the commitments of the Bishop to his own congregation. The rule has been followed that at the beginning of each year the Bishop asks which congregations would like to be visited. These letters of invitation have led to positive responses, so that the Bishop has been able to visit congregations *before* burning issues have necessitated a visitation. The primary intent of visitations is not to deal with issues of conflict, but to engage congregations on their congregational work, get an *outsider* perspective, exchange thoughts and ideas, set new goals for mission and outreach and much more. The Bishop himself has been enriched by these conversations, with experiences gained being shared with other congregations again.

Singled out for this report is the uplifting visitation of the ELC. The transition from Missionary Wittenberg to Pastor Mntambo has been seamless. Despite continuing as a lecturer at the LTS, Pastor Mntambo has adapted well to his work as a pastor, well supported by his church council. Sunday services are well attended, often by more than 130 people, with

new visitors regularly attending the church services. For FELSISA's *Standard Order of Service* is used. Often up to 16 different language groups have attended the services, English being the common language used. A characteristic of the ELC is the introduction of some African choruses during Holy Communion (with English summary translations projected onto the screen). The ELC epitomises a congregation that is there for *all people*, very welcoming to all those who attend. Most encouraging is the dramatic increase in thank offerings, which, among other, has led to the purchase of flat (as a parsonage) to be paid off in 5 years. The ELC of course remains grateful to the LTS on which premises the church services are held.

Word needs to be spread throughout Synod, that the FELSISA has a congregation in Pretoria, where services are held every Sunday in *English*.

7. Personnel Situation

7.1 Vacancies, Pastors and Vicars

As noted above, Pastor Chris Johannes (Greyotwn) will be retiring on 31 October 2014. At the beginning of 2015 Pastor Tiedemann (Our Saviour) will be returning to Germany, and in July 2015 Pastor Dr. Walter Winterle's (Cape Town) will also be reaching retirement age. His fixed term service contract with the FELSISA and his South African work permit will be expiring on 31 December 2015.

FELSISA is however blessed by the fact that all above positions can, God willing, be filled. In 2013 two students of theology, Heinz Hiestermann and Roland Johannes, commenced their vicarage in the FELSISA, in Kirchdorf/Our Saviour and Lüneburg respectively. Both completed their exam for the office of the ministry on 30 July 2014 successfully and were added to the list of candidates for a call. Heinz Hiestermann requested study leave until the end of October 2014 to work on (and hopefully complete) his Ph.D. Vicar Roland Johannes will continue with his vicarage in Lüneburg (with specialised tasks).

In 2013 Pastor Karl Böhmer, who served an LC-MS congregation for the past 5 years, contacted the Bishop about returning to South Africa again, having been released from his congregation to complete his Ph.D. studies. The Synodical Council decided that Pastor Böhmer will be included in the list of candidates for a call, once the two vicars, already in service of the FELSISA have been ordained and installed in a congregation. However Pastor Böhmer's return has made it possible to fill all positions up to and including the retirement of Pastor Dr. Winterle (Cape Town). Pastor Böhmer and family are presently in Pretoria. Pastor Böhmer hopes to complete his Ph.D studies in 2014 and could serve as a post-graduate scholar at the University of Pretoria until such time when he receives a call.

7.2 Students of Theology

In contrast to most churches the FELSISA is blessed with an abundance of students of theology. Almost ready to commence with his 1st Theological Exam is Mathias Hohls (Pretoria). Indications are that he hopes to continue with his doctorate and is presently considering his future. Marlon Hiestermann (Wittenberg) has just returned from *Concordia Theological Seminary* in Ft Wayne (USA), where he studied for one year as an exchange student from the *Lutherische Theologische Hochschule* (LTH), Oberursel, Germany. Marlon Hiestermann is engaged to Kristen Marincic (also from Fr. Wayne, USA). They are to be married on 23 August 2014. Also studying in Germany are Martin K. Paul (Panbult), married to Nicola Wortmann on 9 August 2013, Andreas Albers (Panbult) and Christian Straeuli

(Pretoria). Studying at the University of Pretoria (BTh and BA) are Markus Peschel (Kirchdorf) and Stefan Straeuli (Our Saviour). Philip Wortmann (Our Saviour) has indicated that he wishes to be included in the list of students of theology of the FELSISA, with his studies commencing in 2015. The fairly large number of students is of little concern to the synodical council as we trust that God will provide the necessary positions. Jesus words remain true: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Mt. 9:37). The FELSISA clearly needs to expand and or provide pastors to partner churches that in the past have served the FELSISA so well. We are very grateful for every student of theology. Pastor Helmut Paul (Wittenberg) has been requested by the Synodical Council to serve as student advisor.

8. Statistics

From 2011 to 2012 the FELSISA showed a slight increase in members from 2674 o 2676 (0.07%). The statistics of 2013, however, gave reasons for concern. Membership dropped from 2676 to 2613, a loss of 63 members (or -2.35%), with *paying members* showing a drop of 86 members (or -3.98%) - the size of a smaller FELSISA congregation. The two associated members, the EELC and the ELC both registered gains (EELC: 2012 = 2004 members / 2013 = 2028 and the ELC: 2012 = 88 members / 2013 = 130 members).

The Synodical Council investigated. No too many FELSISA members *officially resigned*, and if they did, the reasons were usually related to marriage or relocation to where there is no FELSISA congregation. Disconcerting however was the number of members registered as *fallen by the wayside*, 63 in two congregations of the FELSISA. On requesting the names of those members, these could not be provided and were put forward as *statistical errors* of the past. One other congregation showed a straight loss of 51 members, most of them featuring neither in the column of those who had *resigned* or *fallen by the wayside*, again explained as a *statistical error* of the past. This prompted the Bishop to write a letter to the pastors, emphasising the importance of doing proper statistics not only in order to determine Synodical levies, but primarily as a matter of exercising good *pastoral care*. If members cannot be accounted for, it most probably reflects the degree of pastoral care shown.

With such a loss of membership it was very difficult to keep the budget of the FELSISA within the range of inflation + 5%, especially as two students had also commenced their vicarage. This resulted in a below inflation salary hike of 5% to all pastors of the FELSISA. It was also suggested that if certain pastors show an *administrative weakness*, Church Councils should give this task to another individual in the congregation. Equally important is that church councils take responsibility and discuss the statistics in detail before they are forwarded to the Bishop.

The sometimes rather large discrepancy in *confirmed members* and *paying members* also needs to be addressed. The three year *exception clause* is intended only for such new (confirmed) members, that haven't really belonged to the Church of Christ and have never learned the practise of tithing or making regular thank offerings. It is not a general *saving mechanism*. This does not address the problem, however, that congregations that show growth invariably have to pay a large increase in levies. The planned new structure of the FELSISA needs to take this into account. Nor does it address the problem of a slowing economy that invariably leads to congregations not willing to keep *non-active members* in their books. Having said that, it is important that even if non-active members are registered as *fallen by the wayside*, congregations should keep contact with them as long as possible (possibly through a *friendship-list*) as concern for finances should not supersede *pastoral care*. Bottom line is, the fulfilling the Great Commission of the Lord (Mt.18:19-20) is

imperative for the well-being of the church. Mission and outreach should be a daily prayer-item in all FELSISA congregations.

Reference is also made to the recent letter of the Bishop on *membership and transfers*, dated 11 June 2014.

9. Contacts with other Churches, locally and internationally

9.1 Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA)

At a combined meeting of church councils in December 2011 concrete steps were tabled on how the LCSA and the FELSISA can move closer together and bridge the divide that continues to exist between the two churches. The goals shared are (1) to have at least one annual meeting of the LCSA Council and the Synodical Council of the FELSISA, (2) to have one biannual combined Pastors' Conference, and (3) also to have a combined church festival (mission or song festival) regularly. The discussions between the two church councils would include efforts on working towards a church model and structure that could unify the churches in future. However proposed dates from the Bishop of the FELSISA for such meetings did not fit into the schedule of the LCSA Bishop and the LCSA Church Council. Also no suitable date could be found for a combined Pastors' Conference as LCSA pastors usually have their scheduled meetings during the school holidays, when in turn FELSISA pastors are not always available. Regionally and locally there have been many encounters between the Churches, with expertise being exchanged, joint projects undertaken, and meetings of pastors. The *Mission of Lutheran Churches* (MLC), where both the LCSA and the FELSISA are represented, could in future possibly play an even more active role in bringing the Churches closer together and organising combined events.

9.2 Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) in Tshwane

At the LTS in Tshwane the LCSA, FELSISA and MLC are represented and constitute the official members of the seminary. The chairman of the Board of Directors (BOD), Dr. Gunter Rencken (Johannesburg) has prepared a written report on the LTS. The LTS has been a blessing to many Lutheran Churches in Africa, as students from all over Africa study at the seminary. In this sense the LTS is not only an educational institution, but a mission project. Apart from annual funding, the FELSISA's role has largely been confined to Board and Member meetings. But for many years it has always been the expressed goal of the FELSISA to have its own students study at the LTS. This vision was again shared with the BOD by the Synodical Council of the FELSISA in a letter dated 19 February 2014. It requested the BOD to investigate to what degree this vision is realisable and whether a strategy and implementation plan could be drawn up that would outline the steps that need to be taken, by the FELSISA, for this vision to be realised. At the time of writing this report no official answer had been received from the BOD, but indications are that a combined commission is to investigate the matter.

9.3 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, Natal-Transvaal (ELCSA N-T)

During the 2012 Synodical Convention, which was attended by Bishop Horst Müller, it was requested that talks with the ELCSA (N-T) be speeded up. This led to an official meeting on 7 May 2013 between the two church councils in Bonaero Park. Apart from informal introductions this meeting also served the purpose of both churches explaining their practise of Holy Communion, with the other - at his point - *listening* to try and gain understanding of

the others theological position and the historical factors that have shaped that position. Due to full schedules, and indeed no other reason, there has not been a subsequent meeting of councils. However the two Bishops have met on at least three occasions. Some *procedural* matters that are to pave the way for future talks were agreed upon:

- We will not talk *about* one another, but will always seek conversation *with* one another.
- We will make every effort that even if there is a lack of understanding, we will nevertheless respect the rules and guidelines as presented in the constitutions of our respective churches and the pastoral decisions made and also communicate these to our members.
- We will seek areas of cooperation and promote good neighbourliness in Christ-like love.

There is little doubt that amongst the majority of laity matters of *doctrine* that have kept the churches apart, especially during celebrations of Holy Communion, are understood less than ever before. This led to the request at the 2010 FELSISA Convention that the *differences* that keep the churches apart should, for better understanding, be summarised again. Pastor Kurt Schnackenberg (as recently as the 2014 Pastors' Convention) agreed to do the "blue-print" from the perspective of the FELSISA, but the intention is not to write *about* the other, but to *engage* the other, with the aim to publish something *together*. Such a combined effort could indeed lead to constructive theological dialogue..

It may be noted with gratitude to God that the ELCSA (N-T) and the ELCSA (Cape Church), who are in church fellowship with one another, are presently engaged in unity talks.

9.4 International Lutheran Council (ILC) and Partner Churches

The ILC plays an important role in bringing confessional Lutheran Churches together, with its meetings often providing the Bishop of the FELSISA the opportunity to meet with and to engage leaders and theologians of its Partner Churches.

The 24th Conference of the ILC was held from 14-21 September 2012 at Niagara Falls, Canada, on the topic *What does this mean? How do the Scriptures speak to crisis facing the confessional Lutherans today?* Papers were presented on *Preaching the Good News today*, *Same-sex issues in the Church*, and *Ordination of women to the pastoral office*. The Bishop of the FELSISA was responsible for all (daily) Bible studies during the conference, held on different Parables of Jesus relating to the Word of God. One of these Bibles Studies was also published in a South African journal. Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt (SELK) was elected as chairman of the ILC with Dr. Albert Colver (LC-MS) serving as the Executive Secretary.

The 5th ILC World Seminaries Conference was held from 8-11 August 2013 in Palanga, Lithuania, on the topic *Suffering, persecution and martyrdom as a mark of the Church*. These seminary conferences serve the purpose to connect confessional Lutheran theologians. As the FELSISA will getting a new crop of qualified theologians soon, consideration will be given on who in future can represent the FELSISA.

The Seminary Conference gave the FELSISA Bishop the opportunity to also visit the FELSISA students of the theology studying at the *Lutherische Theologische Hochschule* (LTH) in Oberursel, Germany, and also to engage the professors on various topics. As a Synod we are immensely grateful for the good and enriching relationship that we continue to have with the SELK. Our students are well appreciated at the LTH and our vicars get regular

invitations to attend the *Praktisch Theologisches Seminar*, a post-graduate practical course in theology. Through the exchange programme with *Concordia Lutheran Seminary*, Ft Wayne (USA), many of our students also get the opportunity to study one year in the USA and meet LC-MS professors and pastors. It may also be noted that in May 2014 Bishop Voigt received an honorary doctorate from the *Concordia Lutheran Seminary* in Edmonton, Canada.

On special invitation from the president of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil* (IELB), the FELSISA Bishop also attended the 61st National Church Convention of the IELB held from 1-4 May in Aracruz in the province of Espírito Santo. It was an enriching event, with more than 1100 people registering to take part in the convention and more than 7000 people attending the closing service. The topic of the convention sought to address the question: *How can confessional Lutheranism serve the mission?* This in itself is an enlightening question. Confessional Lutheranism, in the sense of adhering to the Scripture as the inspired Word of God, serves no real purpose if it is not *missional*. The IELB has some brilliant theologians and the FELSISA would profit by engaging more with this Partner Church. The Convention was also attended by Rev. Dr. Walter Winterle from the FELSISA (Cape Town), a former president of the IELB.

9.4 Conferences and symposiums

The Bishop of the FELSISA together with about 125 other Lutheran leaders worldwide received an invitation from the LC-MS to attend an International Conference on Confessional Leadership in the 21st Century, held from 31 October to 2 November 2012 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. The conference served mainly to highlight and to explore the three fold focus of the LC-MS, *Witness (matyria)*, *Fellowship (koinonia)*, and *Mercy (diakonia)*. A second conference on Confessional Leadership is planned for 2015 in Wittenberg.

In 2013 the FELSISA Bishop was also asked to present at a Symposium in Oberursel, Germany. The *Exegetical Symposium*, held from 7-9 November, looked at different approaches in the exposition of Scripture. This valuable exercise shows how the different methodological approaches reveal particular aspects in a text, often overlooked by others, thereby highlighting the need for theological dialogue. Bishop Reinstorf presented on a *Contextual Approach* to Galatians 3:26-28.

Various other local conferences and Conventions were also attended.

9.5 Office of the Bishop

The office of the Bishop is both simple and complex. On the one hand it is filled by one person, who is the full-time pastor of a congregation, the *Immanuel* congregation in Pietermaritzburg. On the other hand, an endless number of people are engaged to support the Bishop, all of who serve the office in an honorary position, that is, without remuneration and usually before and after normal working hours. The Synodical Council and in particular the Bishop wishes to express his heartfelt gratitude to all those who serve the FELSISA. It is an arrangement which enables the FELSISA to be administered and led with a minimal budgeted amount.

The office of the Bishop has however often been a point of discussion at Synodical Council meetings. The way forward largely depends on expectations and a future vision. If the office of the Bishop is to be a part-time position, as it is at the moment, it coincides with a vision, where the Bishop fulfils a low profile role, with limited visitations, attendance of meetings,

presentations and preaching opportunities in congregations, planning of conventions and other meetings, self-study, etc. The advantage is that he remains a pastor and continues to understand what pastors and congregations deal with. Should, however, the expectation be that the Bishop is more visible, visits congregations more often, serves as support to the pastors, spends more time on theological reflection, engages in more talks with other churches, etc these expectations carry a vision of a (more) full-time position. Deliberations on this topic at Synodical Council meetings have not yielded a solution but have heightened the need of prayer as we seek God's guidance for our Synod.

10. **Conclusion**

It is our deep desire to listen to God's guidance and allow his Spirit to guide us as we seek to be a Synod for all people, not there for ourselves, but in the mission field of God, ready to become all things to all men to save some.

As we move forward into a future that at times seems very uncertain, we again (as two years ago) invite all members of the FELSISA to carefully study God's Word and to TRUST his guidance. Let us WELCOME all people and allow God to work heartfelt CARE for others.

TRUSTING - WELCOMING - CARING

Respectfully submitted by
Dieter Reinstorf
Bishop, FELSISA
Date: 18 August 2014