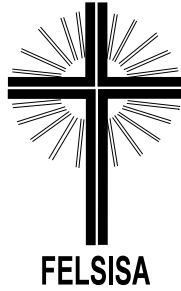


4/09 December 2009



# **FELSISA Witness**

# **VELSISA Boodsapper**

**Newsletter of the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa**  
**Nuusbrief van die Vrye Evangelies Lutherse Sinode in Suid Afrika**



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**Title page:** President Peter and Renate Ahlers

Please send your contributions, remarks and questions to the editor.

FELSISA Witness / VELSISA Boodskapper  
Commissioned by the Synodical Council of the FELSISA

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All contributions for the next edition to be submitted by 28 February 2010

### A somewhat unusual Christmas story

Would it be possible to celebrate Christmas without a Christmas tree in church or at home? Most people wouldn't even consider the possibility. Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without a Christmas tree. But what then has a fir tree to do with Christmas, one could ask? Why would a fir tree be more suitable as a Christmas tree than a lemon tree, or a sycamore-fig tree?

The Bible reports of a Christmas event that didn't start out in front of a tree, but *in* a tree: Zacchaeus the tax collector climbed up a sycamore-fig tree to be able to see Jesus Christ. Zacchaeus was a man who was detested by all. Who would like to be friends with someone, who collaborates with the Roman occupiers of the holy land, demanding of his fellow citizens to not only pay taxes to the Romans but also his one personal levy, thereby enriching himself excessively? Zacchaeus became a very lonely man, his loneliness becoming more and more unbearable.

But suddenly there was a glimmer of hope. Zacchaeus heard that Jesus, whose preaching was causing quite an upheaval in the country, wasn't brushing off people like himself. On the contrary: He was showing interest in them. More than that, he was showing commitment to them, even socialising and dining with them. That was quite sensational for Zacchaeus. Seeing Jesus could only be beneficial to him. And that he set out to achieve.

But Jesus was always surrounded

by so many people. Zacchaeus was a short little man. He wasn't able to wriggle through the masses in order to see Jesus. But then he had an idea: If he could just climb up a tree lining the street, he would be able to see Jesus as he came down the road.



The one question that remained, of course, was whether Jesus would take notice of him, sitting on a branch in the tree. Or worse even - would he make fun of him, the tax collector in a tree, exposing him as a godless sinner - one who stole from God's people?

How different it turned out to be! Jesus didn't only take notice of him up in the tree, he stopped under the tree and said to him, that he would like to come over to his house for a visit. But that's not all! He had a very personal message for Zacchaeus: **"Today salvation has come to this house..."**

That means: for you too, for you the detested and hated tax collector, Jesus has come as your Saviour and Redeemer. Even for you he has come to open the doors of heaven. You don't need to be lonely, no, you are part of the community of those, who have found the true meaning, the true sense of their lives.

Zacchaeus understood what Jesus said to him: Such a gift, being accommodated in God's world, cannot go by without a very sincere thank you!

St. Luke summarises Zacchaeus' response with the following words:

***"Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' "***

The basic message of Christmas was delivered to Zacchaeus: ***"Today salvation has come to this house..."*** The passage from the Bible, that traditionally is read on Christmas Eve, summarises the message in the following way: ***"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the***

***Lord"*** (Luke 2:10-11).

That means: Just as Zacchaeus back then, you too have a future - a permanent residence permit for God's eternal Kingdom. In the most well-known Christmas carol it is proclaimed: *Christ, the Saviour is born!* That is the message of Christmas: Christ, the Saviour is born. Zacchaeus, although he wasn't in Bethlehem in that holy night, had the opportunity to get to know the truth of this announcement. He didn't have a fir tree, but Christmas "happened" for him well.

Pastor Kurt Böhmer  
(Uelzen)

## Retirement of Long-standing Servant of the Church as President

The President of the Free *Evangelical-Lutheran Synod in South Africa* (FELSISA), Peter Ahlers, will attain retirement age on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2009, and as a result of this will resign from the office of president.

Initially, after completing his school education in Lüneburg (Germany), Peter Ahlers trained as bookkeeper and was employed as a clerk by the firm *Plaschka Autohaus* in Amelinghausen. His theological studies commenced at the Mission Seminary at Bleckmar in 1966, and continued at the *Lutherische Theologische Hochschule* [Lutheran Theological Seminary] in Oberursel. In 1973 he received a call from the FELSISA, and emigrated to South

Africa in November of that year with his wife Renate, neé Bödeker. His vicarage took place under the tutelage of then President G. Scharlach, at Lüneburg (South Africa). After successfully completing his 2<sup>nd</sup> Theological Examination, Peter Ahlers received a call from the *Christusgemeinde Kirchdorf* (Wartburg, Kwazulu-Natal) in 1974. The ordination and installation service took place on 18th August 1974.

Peter Ahlers served in the following congregations and positions:

**1974-1992:** Pastor of the Christusgemeinde Kirchdorf.

**1982:** Election as a member of the Synodical Council of FELSISA.

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**1985:** Member of the newly established pension committee to revise the pension fund for pastors of FELSISA.

**1990:** Election as vice-president of FELSISA

**1992:** Call as lecturer at the *Lutheran Theological Seminary* (LTS) in Pretoria. 1993 relocated to Pretoria.

**1994:** Elected as president of FELSISA. His installation into this office took place on 21st August in the Christuskirche Kirchdorf.

**1994-1998:** Co-pastor of St Paul's Congregation, Pretoria, with E.-A. Albers, the previous president of FELSISA.

**1999-2006:** Pastor of St John's Congregation, Kempton Park  
Since December 2006:  
Pastor of the Wittenberg Congregation (Mpumalanga).

**31st December 2009:**  
Resignation as president of FELSISA.

As the representative of FELSISA, Peter Ahlers undertook a number of overseas trips. As a result of his travels, FELSISA became widely known. As a member of the Commission on Theology of FELSISA Peter Ahlers was involved in various doctrinal negotiations (beginning in talks with the *Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, WELS, in Milwaukee,

USA in 1995). During his term as president agreements concerning the already existing church fellowship were signed with the *Selbständige Evangelisch Lutherischen Kirche* (SELK - Independent Evangelical

Lutheran Church, Germany) in 1995, and with the *Lutheran Church in Southern Africa* (LCSA) during 2002. Full church fellowship was declared with the following Lutheran Churches:

- *Lutheran Church Missouri Synod* (LCMS) in der USA, 1995
- *Igreja Evangélica Lutheran do Brasil* (IELB), 1999
- *Evangelical Lutheran Church of England* (ELCE), 2003

President Ahlers' input with regard to the

*International Lutheran Council* (ILC), deserves special mention. [The ILC is an international council of confessional Lutheran Churches] He was a participant in a number of conferences of this council:

- 1995: Adelaide, Australia (FELSISA received as a member of the ILC)
- 1999: Cambridge, England
- 2001: Kirchdorf, South Africa
- 2003: Foz du Iguacu, Brasil



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- 2005: Berlin, Germany
- 2009: Seoul, South Korea

Peter Ahlers served on the Executive Committee of the ILC from 2001-2003, and was a member of the delegation that took part in talks with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), in Geneva, Switzerland. Since 2002 he has served as the editor of the ILC News (a newsletter for churches belonging to the ILC).

After his retirement on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009 Peter Ahlers will continue to serve the Wittenberg Congregation (Mpumalanga).

The FELSISA would like to express its appreciation to Peter Ahlers for his humble and selfless service, and thanks God for the time he was able to serve our church.

Dieter Reinstorf  
(Cape Town)

## Interview with Pastor Reinstorf of the Saint Thomas Congregation, Cape Town

*In August 2009 mission student Thomas Benecke made a short internship in St Thomas Congregation, Cape Town. He held the following interview with Dr. Reinstorf:*

*Could you provide me with a short history of the congregation?*

*Saint Thomas congregation was founded in August 1993. Its roots go back to the Lutheran Church Strand Street, situated in the city centre of Cape Town, the oldest non-reformed church in South Africa founded in 1780. Within the greater Lutheran Church body, the Strand Street Church had always enjoyed a degree of independence. However near the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it experienced a (Lutheran) identity crisis. When in the 1990's Pastor C. Huppe was unable to lead the congregation back to a clear confessional stance, he - and with him (over a period of time) about 70 congregants - left the church. Shortly*

*after Saint Thomas congregation was constituted, Pastor Huppe approached the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA) with a view to join that church body. The admission of the congregation was approved by Synod on 14 June 1996 as the only congregation of the FELSISA in the Western Cape. Although the congregation initially experienced good growth, it was set back by a number of unfortunate events. When I was installed as Pastor in January 2003, there were only 37 names on the official register. Of these only a few attended the church services.*

*What is the make-up of the congregation (language, race, income, family relationships, etc)?*

*Today the congregation has 71 members of whom most attend the church services. On average we have*

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more than 40 members in church. Since the congregation was founded, the form of medium has been only English. As the congregation is situated in a traditionally white residential area, most of its members are of European descent. However the profile of the congregation is changing. Slowly but surely people of all races have begun to attend our church services, and even to serve on our church council. Socially and economically the congregation consists of primarily middle-income earners across all age groups. In this year we confirmed four young men (see photo) and one adult.



Youth members from other congregations of the FELSISA (studying in Cape Town) also play an active role in Saint Thomas.

Saint Thomas congregation, Cape Town, is situated in the south-eastern corner of South Africa and is far away from all other congregations of the FELSISA. As a result it had to find its feet independently. In what way did this experience shape the congregation?

Being far removed from the rest of the FELSISA makes the work in the

congregation difficult. As pastor you feel lonely at times. You never have the opportunity to share your personal experiences (positive or negative) with a fellow pastor. Sometimes you also lack new ideas. The congregation in turn also seldom enjoys the privilege of listening to another pastor. Since I am a member on the Synodical Council of the FELSISA, the congregation is well-informed about the FELSISA. However due to the extreme distances, members of Saint Thomas seldom attend festivals or camps organised by Synod.

Questions concerning language and culture are prevalent in the FELSISA at the moment. In what way can Saint Thomas congregation contribute to this debate based on its own experiences?

Language and culture are emotional topics. When a loss is sensed, people feel threatened in their identity. Personally, however, I can testify that my own (core) values and confessional convictions, as well as those of my family, have not changed since we started serving an English speaking congregation. That is an experience not confined to us as a family, but also of some German speaking members who live here in Cape Town and attend our "English" services. After a short while language is no more than a medium of communication and you hardly register the changeover from one language to the next. The same is true for the cultural differences. You obtain a degree of "far-sightedness" (beyond the confines of your own culture) and almost automatically space becomes available in which all

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cultures feel welcome. This topic, however, is not something that can be worked through logically. Even good, Bible-based arguments will not necessarily lead to a new paradigm. It is rather an “experience” you make as you journey with God.

How does the congregation see itself as a “Lutheran Church” in Cape Town and the role it can play locally?

As a congregation we make an effort to proclaim and testify the Word of God according to the confessions of our Lutheran Church faithfully. The cross of Christ, his grace and salvation, are central. Part and parcel of this is a clear understanding of the “theology of the cross” over and against a “theology of glory”. I try to make this voice heard, not only in our Sunday services, but also at the local schools and the inter-confessional gathering of church ministers. I sincerely hope that my efforts in various sectors of our community will at least make the name “Lutheran Church” known. Members of the congregation, however, also promote the Lutheran profile by being convinced Lutherans who share their faith with family and friends.

*What are some of the problems and challenges the congregation faces?*

Rebuilding the congregation was and is a task far more difficult than I ever imagined. Based on past experiences, some members of the congregation had a degree of “distrust” towards the pastor. Over and beyond that Cape

Town is largely a “closed community”. Visiting people in their homes and building a personal relationship remains a great challenge. I sense that most members of the congregation hardly visit each other. As in most cities, there is a definite lack of community and fellowship. We have done much to promote this fellowship, but I am also aware that true fellowship is the fruit of God’s Word. A warm and hearty sense of caring is the result of personally experiencing the grace of God and the fellowship that God himself works through his Spirit.

Mission and outreach remains a great challenge. We encourage “Friendship Evangelism”: Be a good friend! This friendship will provide you with the opportunity to share your faith, or to extend an invitation to a church service or a Bible study.

*... and something positive and joyful?*

Many positive things have happened in the congregation, which fills my heart with joy and gratitude. Even if slower than expected, the congregation has shown steady growth over the years.





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New members, without the baggage of the past, are active and have contributed hugely to the well-being of the congregation. I am also grateful that there is hardly any strife or tension in the congregation. Also in view of the financial obligations, the congregation has been exemplary. In the past seven years the congregation has paid its synodical levies regularly, without the need to continually speak about “money” matters. All contributions are made voluntarily out of gratitude towards God for blessings received. We are, of course, also especially grateful for the support (financially and otherwise) we have received from other congregations within the FELSISA as well as individual members.

Slowly but surely the congregation is also learning to look beyond itself and is becoming more mission-orientated with deeds of kindness towards others. We are

distributing small parcels of food items to the needy in our community, called “Luther’s Loot” (we loot ourselves to help others).

Although of less importance, we are grateful for some of the building extensions we did in the passed few years. The church has been equipped with a parent room. A large part of our inner courtyard is under roof. A Wall of Remembrance has been build (see photo above). A member of our congregation also build a large block of flats (3 bedroom duplexes) on a section of our property (see photo below) . In exchange the congregation has secured the “first” flat for itself.

Establishing a congregation is a slow process that requires a lot of patience. But where God’s Word is proclaimed and his Sacraments are administered, Christ builds his church. We scatter the seed. He provides the growth. Him we trust.



### “Sängerfest” saam met die “engele” te Wittenberg

Op 'n helder lente-oggend in September het ons jaarlikse sangfees, algemeen bekend as die "Sängerfest", in Wittenberg plaasgevind. Dit was ook die Sondag "Michaelis", die dag van



die aartsengel Michael. Hoe pas hierdie twee feeste dan bymekaar? Präses Ahlers, wat die diens gelei het, sê hulle pas baie goed saam, want een van die belangrikste funksies van die engele is die lofprysing van God.

Om hierdie rede was die tema van vanjaar se sangfees dus "Die engele van God". "Michaelis" is die fees waartydens ons gedenk dat die aartsengel Michael, die duiwel met sy gevolg uit die hemele verdryf en gebind het;

hom in 'n afgrond verseël het "...sodat hy nie meer die heidene sou verlei nie..." (Openb.12,7). In die Joodse geloof speel die aartsengel Michael 'n belangrike rol, omdat hy dien as

beskermengel van Israel aan die regterhand van God. Hy ontvang die gebede van die mense en beskerm die gelowiges.

Met 'n program van koorwerke het ons saam met die koor deur die jaar gestap, vanaf Advent en Kersfees deur die dae van die lydensgeskiedenis en Paasfees, tot Pinkster en Trinitatis. Die fees is afgesluit met 'n aantal lof- en dankliedere. Die koor het ons daaraan herinner dat God ons beskerm (Want Hy het aan sy engele opdrag

gegee... deur Mendelssohn), ons het vertoef by Jesus aan die kruis (*Jesus deine Passion*, deur Hugo Distler) en het ons het ons verwonder aan die



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pragtige klanke van Mendelssohn se werke. 2009 is ook die 200ste herdenkingsjaar van Mendelssohn se geboortejaar. 'n Redelik onbekende werk van hom, "*Singet dem Herrn ein neues Lied*", het ons in vervoering gehad.

Ons betuig graag ons dank aan Manfred Johannes, die hoofleier van die koorsang in ons Sinode, sowel as aan al die koorleiers van die onderskeie gemeentes, vir al die harde werk wat met die koorsang en kerkmusiek gepaardgaan. Die Sängerefest was 'n gedenkwaardige gebeurtenis; 'n fees waarvandaan ons die laatmiddag vervuld huistoe gery het en waarvandaan ons die wonderlike musiek en blye ontmoetings met baie mense saam teruggedra het na ons alledaagse lewe.

Präses Ahlers, het dit in sy preek beklemtoon dat die vreugde dat ons name in die hemele geskrywe is, steeds meer gewig dra as alle vreugdevolle ervarings hier op aarde. Dat dit ook tydens oomblikke van groot inspirasie en begeesterdheid steeds duidelik behoort te blyk, dat net God alleen die name vir die ewige lewe neerskrywe. "Ons rede tot vreugde is nie wat hier op aarde met ons gebeur nie, maar wat reeds in die hemel met ons gebeur het."

Min dinge verbind mense hier op aarde soos musiek dit doen; des te meer nog wanneer dit tot eer van die Here geskied. Toe ek 'n paar jaar in Europa gewoon het, het my Ma elke week vir my 'n handgeskrewe, blou lugposbrief gestuur, waarin sy vertel

het van die alledaagse gebeure in Suid-Afrika en ook van ons sinodale kerkfeeste. Gewoonlik het hierdie berigte my ietwat neerslagtig gemaak van verlange, omrede ek destyds baie moes reis vir die werk, my lewe saam met my in 'n koffer gedra het en in hotelle oorgebly het tussen mense wat God doelbewus uit hulle lewens verban het. Oor naweke by die huis het ek dan naartiglik in my musiekversameling gesoek na opnames van die "Sängerefest" in Suid-Afrika, want mens hoor op die opnames meer as net musiek. 'n Mens hoor ook 'n gemeenskap van Heiliges, 'n teenwoordigheid van iets groters, wat afwesig is tussen nie-gelowiges.

Soortgelyk besielend ervaar ek ou opnames van die destydse Kantate-koor van Augsburg (RSA) van 1987, toe lede van die ELKSA-NT en ons sinode saamgespan het vir 'n gesamenlike Kersoptrede. Of die krapperige ou kasset van die inwyding van die nuwe kerkgebou in Panbult in 1977. Die geesdrif tydens die geleentheid voer 'n mens letterlik mee.

Ons het wonderlike stemme in ons kerkkore en het die voorreg om altyd weer die wonder van saam musiek-maak te beleef. Selfs diegene wat beweer dat hulle heeltemal onmusikaal is, is meesal ontvanklik vir die geesdrif en die vreugde wat ontspring uit die lofprysing van God. God ontmoet ons ook in die wonderlike klanke en harmonieë van musiek, wat 'n aanduiding gee van Sy heerlikheid en belofte.

Präses Ahlers het nogmaals beklemtoon dat ons lewensvreugde as

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Christene onafhanklik is van enige ervarings wat ons belewe, want dit is nie ons geesdrif en opgewondenheid wat ons pad na die hemel plavei nie. Dit is net God alleen wat ons name in die hemel neerskryf.

Ons wil dus met ons kerkfeeste die Here se naam groot maak, en

dankie sê vir Sy genade en barmhartigheid. Ons dank Hom vir die musiek, dat Hy in ons midde is en dat ons Hom mag vier . Saam met GF Handel sing ons: "Vir soveel genade sing ons oneindige lof tot Sy eer".

Ute Johannes

## Main purpose fulfilled - English-Afrikaans District of the FELSISA disbands

On 26 September 2009 the English-Afrikaans District of the FELSISA met in Wittenberg (Mpumalanga) for its 4<sup>th</sup> official meeting. After a long debate, the majority of delegates resolved to disband the district. The disbandment was confirmed by the Synodical Council of the FELSISA.

The "district" was constituted in May 2001. Since then it met biennially for an official meeting under the chairmanship of Vice-president Dr. Dieter Reinstorf.

The main purpose of the district was to provide the minority groups in the FELSISA with a "forum" where they could address and debate matters of "own concerns". Proposals could also be tabled at the Synodical Convention of the FELSISA.



However, since Synod resolved in 2008 that the Synodical Convention is to be conducted in "English" from 2010, all language groups within the FELSISA, will be able to present their own proposals to Synod (without having to be represented by a German speaking delegate from within its own ranks). In the past years it has also become increasingly difficult to manage the affairs of Synod simultaneously in two or even three languages.

## JOINED FESTIVALS

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### Joined Reformation Festival in Durban

*Each year the congregations of South Kwazulu-Natal of both the Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA) and the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA) come together for a joined celebration of Reformation. Sharon Govender, a member and Sunday school coordinator of the congregation in Phoenix reports:*

The invitation to the Reformation Service on 1 November 2009 in Durban was warmly received by our congregation in Phoenix. Our dedicated elders phoned all members to remind them again of the festive service to be held at St. Peters in Westville. Our congregation members met at church at 8.00am that morning so that lifts could be organised for those members who did not have transport.

We were greeted by warm smiles and the familiar melodies of the brass band filled the church. The church was filled with people from different cultural backgrounds, languages and social status - yet united in God's house as "one" family meeting together to worship him.

Although the service was one in remembrance of what Martin Luther

had done in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we were reminded in the sermon that we were not to honour Martin Luther, but what Christ himself had accomplished through him. The core message being that we are saved by God's grace and not by our works. The sweet voices of the different choirs added class to our Lutheran tradition. We approached Christ's table and were united through the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After the service we were able to meet and interact with members from the different congregations. This was done over refreshments, some of

which were prepared in true German style.

It is truly remarkable that we as Lutherans can come together in this way. This surely sends out a positive impression to the community at large.

Although we embrace common doctrines and traditions, the ultimate goal of gathering together is to give testimony of God's unconditional love that binds us together, so that we can proclaim in "one" voice God's love and lordship over all.

Sharon Govender  
(Phoenix, Durban)



### 'n Geselsie met...

Tydens gesprekke ervaar ons dikwels dat mense met weëmoedigheid terugdink aan hulle verlede en besef dat hulle die jare wat verby is, nie weer kan terugbring nie: As hulle besef dat hulle te veel tyd en energie spandeer het aan hulle beroepe, of te min tyd aan hulle kinders gegee het; as hulle besef hoe min hulle hul vryheid benut het, of hoe min moed hulle gehad het om tydens benoude oomblikke op te staan vir wat reg is.

Baie mense het grootgeword met die idee dat bepaalde dinge noodwendig is vir 'n gelukkige lewe, maar met verloop van tyd het doelwitte soos mag, 'n beroepsloopbaan en rykdom vervaag. Vir baie mense het hulle aanvanklike doelwitte teleurstellend, onbestendig en nie-nastrewenswaardig geblyk te wees. Baie mense het agterna spyt gehad oor die verlies aan lewensvreugde, meegevoel en entoesiasme wat hulle gely het, omrede hulle eie doelwitte hardvogtigheid en onsensitieweit vereis het.

Maar daar is ook gelukkige mense. Onder hulle is daar selfs diegene wat aan 'n gestremdheid ly, of aan wie 'n swaar lewenslot toegeken is, of diegene wat nooit enige besigheidsukses kon behaal nie. God lei ons ook langs kronkelpaie na Sy doelwit toe. En God gee aan ons 'n vry wil. Selfs wanneer ons eie besluite agterna kortsigtig blyk te wees, kan God iets goeds daaruit maak, wat Sy saak dien. Die Deense filosoof Søren Kierkegaard het geskryf:

...selfs al dwaal ek met wakker oë, verander U, o oneindige Liefde, my dwalinge in iets nog beters, as wat my regte besluit sou gewees het...

God gebruik ook ons swakhede in Sy diens. Paulus skryf dat God se krag in die swakke mens magtig is. God se wonderlike leiding kan ons paaie in 'n pelgrimstog verander, waartydens ons wonderlike dinge met Hom beleef en waartydens ons deur uitsonderlike ontmoetings verryk word. In elke situasie van die lewe kom ons te staan voor die besluit om te konsentreer op die positiewe of op die negatiewe aspekte van 'n ontmoeting. Die positiewe hou langer en dra meer standhoudend goeie vrugte. En soms is 'n volhardende geloof in die goeie, die enigste uitweg uit 'n moeilike situasie.

Eendag sal ons verstom wees oor die liefdevolle en geduldige begeleiding van ons Heer, tydens ons aardse bestaan; dat Hy ons altyd weer optel as ons struikel en ons bemoedig om voort te gaan; dat ons foute nie so belangrik is nie, maar eerder die doelwit wat ons nastreef.

Ons het 'n paar mense in ons gemeentes gevra wat hulle lewens die moeite werd gemaak het, of wat hulle anders sou doen as hulle weer van voor af kon lewe. Die onderstaande is sommige van die antwoorde:

## LATEST NEWS

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- ▶ "Meer geduldig wees en meer tee drink."
- ▶ "Ek sou meer gereeld vir my familie gaan kuier..."
- ▶ "Ek wens ek kon meer selfversekerd gewees het en reeds as 'n jongmens meer vir die bejaardes omgee het, maar andersins is ek dankbaar vir wyse waarop die liewe Here my voortdurend bygestaan het."
- ▶ "Ek sou weer my lewe wou leef, maar met die wysheid wat ek vandag het..."
- ▶ "Ek sou niks verander nie. Elke

lewe kom te staan voor kruispaai en besluite. Watter pad kies mens? In retrospek kan ek net met dank betuig dat elke besluit, skielike gebeure of verliese wat ek beleef het, presies die regte ding was wat op daardie oomblik in my lewe gebeur het. Ek loof en dank die wyse hemelse Vader, wat my lewe vir my beplan en rig."

Ute Johannes in gesprek met mense van ons sinode

## Latest News

### 15<sup>th</sup> General Church Synod of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA)

From 30 November to 2 December 2009 the Church Synod of the LCSA will convene in Klerksdorp (North-West Province). Part of the proceedings is

the election of a new bishop.

Bishop David Tswaedi returns the office of bishop after serving in this position for 16 year.

Bishop Tswaedi was

elected as bishop in January 1993. He was, however, only installed as bishop in a festive service on 5 December 1993.

From 1987 he served as a pastor in various congregations: Ledig, Rietfontein, Manamela, Mabieskraal und Modikewe (near Rustenburg). From 2001 he was the pastor of Mofolo-North parish in Soweto, Johannesburg.

For his part in the translation of the Lutheran Confessions in Setswane he received a honorary doctorate from *Concordia Seminary*, St. Louis (USA). As his greatest "gift", however, he values the invitation to proclaim the Gospel in the Church of St. Mary in Wittenberg (during the ILC Conference in 2005), where Luther himself preached.



## LATEST NEWS

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After standing down as bishop (March 2010), Bishop Tswaedi will make himself available to teach at the *Lutheran Theological Seminary* (LTS) in Tshwane. From August 2010 the enrolment in a doctorate degree (New Testament, hermeneutics) at *Concordia Seminary*, St. Louis (USA) is envisaged.

### **Visit of Bishop H.-J. Voigt of the Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (SELK) in Germany to South Africa**



In December 2009 Bishop Hans-Jörg Voigt, will accompany the Mission Director Markus Nietzke on a visit to South Africa. He will be meeting, among others, the

members of the Synodical Council of the FELSISA in Pretoria. During his visit the **Shareholder Agreement** of the *Lutheran Theological Seminary* (LTS) in Tshwane is to be signed by the church leaders of the *Lutheran Church in Southern Africa* (LCSA), the *Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa* (FELSISA) and the *Mission of Lutheran Churches* (MLC).

### **The ELC in Arcadia (Pretoria) is constituted**

On 11 November 2009 the great majority of the voting members of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church* (ELC) resolved to formally constitute itself as a congregation.

The ELC meets on the premises of the Seminary (LTS) in Arcadia. The congregation is served by Pastor Axel Wittenberg, a missionary from the *Mission of Lutheran Churches* (MLC), the mission society of the *Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church* (SELK). The congregation is also the spiritual home of the lecturers and students of the LTS. Talks on officially joining one of the local Lutheran Churches are in progress.

### **The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa (ELKSA-NT) elects a new bishop**

From 15-18 October the United Church Synod of the ELKSA-NT met in the North-Rand Congregation (Bryanston, Johannesburg).



Of the five nominated candidates Pastor Horst Müller was elected as bishop of the church. Bishop Müller was born in Pretoria in



## OFFICIAL NOTICES

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1958. After concluding his study of theology in Pietermaritzburg and Umpumulo (and a vicarage in Steinhude, Germany) he was the pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Piet Retief from 1985 until 1990. Thereafter he was youth pastor for two years at the Lutheran House of Theology in Pietermartiz-

burg. He also served as a full-time Mission assistant for one year. From 1994 until 2008 he served the Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Pietermaritzburg. He returned to Pretoria as Pastor of the St. Peter's Lutheran congregation during Easter 2008. Bishop Müller is married to Edna, neé Dedekind.

## Official Notices

### Office of the President

On reaching retirement age, president Peter Ahlers will hand back the office of the president on 31 December 2009. According to the Constitution of the of the FELSISA Vice-president Dr. Dieter Reinstorf will assume responsibility for the duties on 1 January 2010 until the next regular Synodical Convention.

Dr. Reinstorf was elected to the Synodical Council in 1994. Since 2004 he holds the office of Vice-president. He is presently the pastor of St. Thomas Congregation in Cape Town. He can be contacted at:  
E-mail: dreinstorf@felsisa.org.za  
Tel. 021-9303734 or 083-4409498

### Synodical Convention 2010

The general Synodical Convention of the FELSISA is to take place on 4 and 5 May 2010. During this Convention the election of members of the Synodical Council will be held. St. Peter's Congregation has extended an invitation for the Synodical Convention to take place in Durban-Westville.

Congregations of the FELSISA have been informed concerning the date by which motions are to be submitted.

### Vicars

**Tobias Ahlers** has concluded his studies at the *Westfield House* in Cambridge, England. He is presently doing an internship in a congregation in London, which belongs to our sister church, the *Evangelical Lutheran Church of England*. He and his wife Walda are expected in South Africa in mid-January 2010. Tobias will do his vicarage in St. Peter's Congregation Durban Westville under the tutorship of Pastor Helmut Straeuli.

**Helmut Paul** is to conclude his studies in Germany with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Theological Examenination at the *Lutherische Theologische Hochschule* (Lutheran Theological Seminary) in Oberursel in March 2010. He will do his vicarage in St. Paul's Congregation Pretoria under the tutorship of Pastor Matthias Albers.

**FREE EV.- LUTH. SYNOD IN SOUTH AFRICA - Statistic for the year Aug. 2008 - July 2009**

Congregations	Mem- bers Aug. 2008	Bap- tisms	Trans- fers in	New mem- bers	Deaths	Trans- fers out	Fallen away	Resig- na- tions	Mem- bers July 2009	Con- firmed Mem- bers	Chil- dren	Con- fir- ma- nds
Durban	186	2	3	1	1	1	-	5	185	148	37	3
Greytown	133	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	130	105	25	1
Johannesburg	176	3	-	27	3	1	14	-	188	147	41	3
Kapstadt	66	1	2	3	-	-	1	-	71	58	13	-
Kempton Park	13	-	3	-	-	-	-	1	15	13	2	-
Kirchdorf	350	1	4	-	1	15	-	6	333	278	55	5
Our Saviour	43	1	6	1	1	-	-	-	50	40	10	1
Lüneburg	327	6	3	2	1	4	-	3	330	265	65	6
Newcastle	23	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	19	5	-
Panbult	81	4	-	-	1	-	-	4	80	63	17	-
Piet Retief	25	1	-	-	-	4	-	2	20	14	6	-
Pietermaritzburg	86	-	4	1	1	2	-	-	88	76	12	-
Pretoria (Afr)	64	-	4	-	-	3	7	2	56	41	15	-
Pretoria (Ger)	343	6	8	1	1	5	-	-	352	300	52	9
Randburg (ELF)	110	3	2	29	1	10	-	-	133	96	37	-
Shelly Beach	86	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	86	63	23	-
Uelzen	121	3	-	-	3	-	-	-	121	100	21	1
Vryheid	63	1	1	-	-	1	3	2	59	44	15	-
Wittenberg	336	4	-	10	3	2	7	5	333	277	56	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2632</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2654</b>	<b>2147</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>36</b>

Increase in membership 11 = 0,4%

### Twaalf Nagte

Jörg Zink skryf in sy boek "Twaalf nagte", oor die nagte tussen Kersfees - die 24ste Desember - en die dag van die verskyning van Christus - die 6de Januarie - ook genoem die *Dag van die Drie Konings*.

Hierdie twaalf nagte is tradisioneel met diepe inkeer deur vroeëre geslagte tegemoet gegaan. Hulle het hulself met hart en siel voorberei vir die geboorte van Christus. In vandag se tye word ons dae voor die feestyd in beslag geneem deur Kersfees "logistiek". Deur voorbereidings vir oordadige kersetes, deur versierings en kuiergaste en deur groot vakansieplanne.

Jörg Zink vertel in sy boek: "Dis asof die dae van besinning oor die koms van Christus, die Adventstyd wat dae van inkeer en stilte was, in die vergetenheid verdwyn het... Geslagte het verbygegaan sedert mense 'n Kersfees gevier het wat soortgelyk was aan die ontvangs van 'n magtige heerser in die armsalige hut van 'n kneg; 'n hut wat nie gevul was met rykdom nie, maar wat tekens getoon het van 'n alledaagse lewe wat gereinig is met die eenvoudige en geringe dinge van die lewe. Dit is vandag asof die misterie verdwyn het...in die besige gewoel en die leë gepraat oor die fees. En die fees wat aan ons geskenk is om aan ons nuwe krag te gee blyk nou net die uur te wees wat aandui dat ons kragte uitgeput is.

Miskien is die weke van Advent inderdaad verlore; in elk geval vir die huidige geslag of vir 'n aantal jare.

Daar bly egter vir ons nog die moontlikheid oor, om die stilte te soek waar dit nog nie verbreek is nie, naamlik in die dae *na die fees*. Miskien ontdek ons die geheimenis na die fees, wanneer alle pligte afgehandel is, die kersliedere klaar gesing is en die kerse aan die boom uitgebrand is, wanneer die ou jaar afsluit en 'n nuwe jaar begin. Miskien ontdek ons rustelose mense van vandag 'n nuwe reeks van dae, wat vir vele geslagte voor ons 'n dieper betekenis gehad het: "Die twaalf heilige nagte", wat tydens Kersfees begin en tot by die Drie-Koningsdag strek. Miskien word ons 'n oomblik gegun waartydens ons alleen is - alleen met 'n woord of 'n beeld, 'n oomblik waarin ons 'n gebed doen en waarin ons iets van die geheimenis van ons menswees, die geheimenis van God in ons, sal ontdek."

Jörg Zink haal in sy boek 'n dialoog aan van 'n gesprek tussen 'n vermoeide werker en die Jesuskind:

Die werker vertel: "Dit is nou Kersfees en ek is doodmoeg. Ek het so hard gewerk en moes soveel dinge klaarkry voor die groot fees." Toe is dit vir my asof die Jesus-kind my antwoord: "Dis goed dat jy dit vir my sê, want ek is hier vir die vermoedtes en oorlaides..." Ek sê vir die kind: "Ek weet dat u die hoofsaak tydens Kersfees is. Daarom bedroef dit my dat ek in hierdie dae so min aan u gedink het en tydens geen erediens met my hele hart betrokke was nie." Die kind antwoord: "Jy het tog hierdie

## DATES AND GENERAL NOTICES

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jaar weer gehoor dat ek vir jou gebore is en jy het gesing: *'O die goeie tyding...'* Ek gaan voort: "Binne in my is alles dood. As kind kon ek nog oor Kersfees opgewonde raak." Die kind antwoord: "Maar dan moet jy in jou hart weer 'n kind word. Vertoef 'n rukkie by my en besef dat jou Here juis om hierdie rede 'n kind geword het.." Ek sê verder: "Ek kon vir u niks gee nie. Ek weet nie eers hoe om iets vir u te gee nie. Wat kan ek vir u gee?" Die kind antwoord: "Jy weet hoe selde

daar enige liefde by aardse geskenke betrokke is. Het jy dalk 'n bietjie liefde vir my?" Ek beken eerlik: "Ek koester nie regtig diepe gevoelens vir u nie, maar ek weet - en ek is nie seker of dit liefde impliseer nie - dat ek u ten spyte van alles nodig het." Toe antwoord die kind: "Ek aanvaar dit as 'n baie kosbare geskenk, want dit is vir my genoeg dat jy my nodig het."

Bron: Zwölf Nächte en Wikipedia

### Dates 2010

#### 9-11 February

Ladies, Camp at FELS

#### 5 March

Proposals to Synod to be handed in to the Synodical Council

#### 4-5 May

Synodical Convention in Durban

#### 12-13 June

Synodical Youth Day and Brass Band Festival in Kirchdorf

#### 16-18 August

Pastors' Convention

#### 10 October

Song Festival in Greytown

Visit the  
**Website of the FELSISA**  
**[www.felsisa.org.za](http://www.felsisa.org.za)**

There you will find links to all congregations of the FELSISA, contact details of the pastors, Sunday Service times, and also the websites of the congregations.

### Invitation to join the Ladies' Camp: 9-11 February 2010 at FELS (the Camp is held in German)

**Topic:** "... do you love me?" A reflection on Christ, his love, and our response! with pastors D. Reinstorf (Cape Town), D. Schnackenberg (Lüneburg), and M. Ahlers (Vryheid/Newcastle). Also singing, walking, time for quiet reflection!

Registration before 31 January 2010 with Gudrun Johannes (083 656 9607).

**Notice:** Small unfurnished flat (suitable for single person) available for rental in Westville / Durban. Flat consists of bedroom, bathroom, living room, kitchen nook and veranda, with private entrance. Inquiries: Martin Meister ([meister@telkomsa.net](mailto:meister@telkomsa.net)) or at 082-375 2738).

Adverts for members of FELSISA: R100 for a maximum of 50 words.