

Synod 2017: Closing Comments by outgoing President Wolfgang Fechter, 17 September

Dear sisters and brothers,

We are now closing the first sitting of the 7th period synod of our church ELKSA (N-T). I hope you have been inspired by God and accepted that he has called you by name to lead this church of him.

Thank you to our guests who have travelled this journey with us. Your presence is valued and appreciated. Thank you to the theme leadership team for your thorough preparation and the attempt to integrate sermons, devotions, bible study and thesis through panel discussion. The panel discussion today was inspiring. On a lighter note, much better than most that I have experienced in business or the World Economic Forum. On Thursday, we started with: "The Lord has called you! He wants you here!" Friday, we discovered God himself is at work: "I will". Today we are challenged to move forward in difficult circumstances. Tomorrow you are called to be God's witness. For each of us we we'll take different parts home. For me personally to include "mixed" as one of the four characteristics of church surprised me but it is so true. When you are in leadership you often experience this for yourself and those who you lead individually and collectively.

Thank you to Bishop Horst Muller, Liselotte Knocklein and Yolanda Killian for the excellent preparation for synod. The extensive planning in church council helps to guide us in preparing and executing the synod.

A big thank you to the Hermannsburg congregation and school for hosting us. It was like a short holiday in beautiful and peaceful surroundings. You spoiled us.

Thank you to the worship team. You challenged many of use with new songs and together we could worship in song.

Thank you to the synod council for supporting me in leading synod. Your willingness to help and support is much appreciated. This was the first time that we benefited from the new arrangement that the whole synod council is part of the first sitting of the next synod period. From my perspective, it really worked. I wish the new Synod council all the best and inspiration to lead the next 3 synods and beyond. Keep on making synod more relevant and effective.

Thank you for the committee members. We appreciate the excellent word of greetings, well run elections and efficiently formulated motions. The legal committee only needed to meet once which I interpret as good sign. Thank you for the opportunity to be part of Synod, circuit council and church council. The fellowship and growth in faith was inspiring. I'll miss the friendships, ringing for decisions, devotions and singing. I have been part of synod 21 years starting off as a representative for the New Germany congregation, 9 years serving circuit council in Southern Circuit and 12 years as president of synod serving on church council. As it happened Horst was Dean of the Southern Circuit for that period and farmer and Ron Kusel for six years. When we lead visitations, I was often amazed at how aligned we were on where to lead the congregations in opening up although we did not always plan it formally that way. Both Ron and myself have worked closely together on finances and structures in support of church. Thank you to Horst and Ron for the close co-operation and experience of being brothers in faith.

During this period the country and the church went through a deep transformation. The country to full democracy and transforming towards a better joint future. The church from German to opening up and becoming diverse. I am privileged to be part of New Germany congregation and this morning Ammon with his deep voice and insights shared the integrated diverse congregation which it is today. One of the theses of NGLC summarises how I experience where we are as a congregation and what I pray for us as a church: "Strive to be Christ-like always, not only in word, but also in deed – offer a beacon of hope in a sea of mistrust, so prevalent in our country today."

I wish the newly elected treasurer and president of synod well in their role. May you be inspired and move the church forward. Petra or Petzi, thank you for your cheerful and creative inputs. To the deans and deputy deans may God bless you and the church through you. You as church and circuit councils face many challenges, but fear not, God has called you each by name.

Thank you for all of your attendance. The full house is appreciated. Please go back into your congregations and share with the congregation in a service and congregational council. Especially the lay members are encouraged to live out the leadership role between synods. Please be pro-active and encourage the process of reformation and theme in your congregation.

I wish you all a safe journey home.

I hereby declare the formal proceedings of synod as closed.

Thank you and God bless