



Bishop's Post

February, March 2019

I am the Lord your God, You shall have no other gods besides me. Exodus 20,1-3

What does this mean for us?

We are to fear, love, and trust God above anything else.

Dear reader,

by the time that you read this, 2019 is in full swing. The December holidays are forgotten. Schools have started, students registered. Now we are anxiously awaiting the announcement of the election date. Political parties are already in full steam electioneering mode. It is the time of empty promises, mudslinging and character assassinations. Rather than nation building, election campaigns are often very destructive and divisive. For that reason, I thought it might be appropriate to reflect on the first commandment.

The commandments, and especially the first one, are given at an important nation building moment. Israel is embarking on the journey to freedom and becoming a nation. At this point God encourages them, urges, or even compels them to acknowledge him as their only God. He is the foundation upon which the nation should be built.

From history we know that faith does not guarantee a healthy nation. Many wars and atrocities were committed in the name of God. The Old South African Rand coin stated: "Soli deo gloria" - to God alone be the glory. The USA Dollar bills quote the official motto of the USA: "In God we trust". And during the Third Reich German soldiers fastened their belts with a buckle stating: "Gott mit uns" - God with us". Publicly claiming and proclaiming God as highest authority did not prevent rulers, governments and nations from doing great harm.

Because of such negative experiences, many governments, including our own, decided to call their state a "secular" state, meaning that it does not adhere to any specific religious beliefs, but merely allows for them to exist.

But again - that too does not guarantee a better government. The no longer new "New South Africa" has done away with many evil laws and regulations, but has caused much new misery too. In many cases the misery was caused by people claiming to be Christians. So - does this first commandment really help to build a nation?

At this stage it is good to study Luther's explanation in the Small Catechism: ***We are to fear, love and obey God above everything else.***

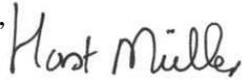
It is not about what we print on money or on slogans. The question is whether we see ourselves to be accountable to God regardless of what laws allow or forbid us to do. "Fear God" does not mean to be afraid of him, but

acknowledging our accountability to him. Whether God appears on our money is irrelevant. What we do with it, is highly relevant.

The first commandment invites us to live a life that “fears, loves and obeys God above everything else” - not as a slogan, but as a fundamental attitude.

Share this invitation with other Christians. Challenge them to do the same. At the same time, allow others to challenge you when your actions do not reflect this. Most of all, be accountable to God when no-one else knows what you are doing or thinking. The first commandment can form the basis for a healthy nation- when we live it!

With kind regards,



News from the Church

Stellenbosch Students encouraged to participate

This information was received from Pastor Felix Meylahn, Stellenbosch:

Student fellowship every Sunday evening at 18:30.

We regularly have a time of worship together in the church. All instrument-players can join in (please bring your instruments along), we meet for coffee, tea and biscuits (often whole meals are prepared together for the always hungry students :-)) and good conversations about our faith and the many questions that come up as we study and live on campus. We go on camps twice a year and care for and support one another through thick and thin. Everyone is welcome!

Students, pass on your names and cell-numbers to us, meylahn@mweb.co.za, so that we can connect with you too - brave as you may be, having a "home away from home" in an overwhelmingly new situation is sometimes a real and urgent need.

Greetings in Christ, Felix Meylahn

eEquip 2019

The annual eEquip retreat went off well. A short report will follow. The next eEquip is planned for 1-5 January 2020 - *reserve the date!*

Name of the Church

Proposals for a new name for our church, ELCSA (N-T) can still be submitted till the end of February. See the previous bishop's post for details.

Dates, ELCSA (N-T) church wide 2019

Choir festival in Braunschweig 12 May 2019

Synod in Bonaero Park, 10-13 October 2019

Next eEquip 1-5 January 2020, Hermannsburg