



RAM 2:16



Bishop's Post June July 2017

Liberated by God's grace ...

"Are you present" was the question. 97% voted Yes, 2% No and 1% Abstain. It was the trial of the electronic voting system used at the 12th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Windhoek (10-16 May 2017). Some were irritated. You cannot vote No or Abstain to this question! Most of the 304 delegates and another 400 guests in the large conference hall however laughed. Humour and joy were an integral part of this assembly.

The underlying theme was the joy of salvation in Christ. This climaxed during the Sunday service in the Sam Nujoma Stadium in Katutura. About 200 brass players, a strong choir and 10 000 worshippers sang Assembly Hymn: "We're liberated, we're liberated by God's grace. The Son of God redeemed us on the cross, we're liberated by God's grace"

This was the underlying theme of the whole assembly: Liberating Grace, so that God's Blessing may come to all nations. Although it was a gathering representing 76 million Lutherans world wide, it was not inside-focussed. Although we celebrated 500 years of Reformation, it was not backward-focussed. The assembly captured the essence and core of the Reformation: What happens when Christ's salvation comes into our lives? What happens, when human beings discover that they are set free by Christ, called to live to his glory?

The verse that accompanied us throughout the event was from Galatians 5,1: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

The sub-topics each received a full morning's attention with worship, bible study, key note address and group work in "villages" (small groups of 25 people, each having members from all continents).

"Salvation not for sale" highlighted the gift of salvation through God's amazing grace. But this salvation is commercialised - at the time of Luther through the selling of indulgences, in our time through lavish prosperity gospel preachers, and within the Lutheran Churches when only paid up members receive communion or can have their children baptized or confirmed.

"Human beings not for sale" humans are created in the image of God, but they are also abused throughout the world, especially of women and children. Currently 65 million people on earth are refugees, most of them through man made disasters.

We also spoke about the persecution of Christians and reflected on the role that we as liberated Christians should be playing in this world.

“Creation not for sale” reminded us that God is the creator, who gave freely and abundantly so that we can live on this earth. We were also made aware of the fact that globally humanity is placing the earth under severe stress. Currently we are depleting the earth 1.6 times faster than it has the capacity to produce. In some first world countries this increases to six times more than the earth can sustain. Because we belong to Christ, through whom the universe was created, we should take care of his creation.

In the closing service, just before the blessing, we were asked: From all corners of the earth - are you ready to live the love of Christ? And all responded: **We are liberated by God’s grace. We will abide in Christ who sets us free!**

Most of the material, bible studies and talks can be followed at <https://www.lwfassembly.org> in the four official languages of the LWF: English, German, Spanish and French. You can use it for bible study, house groups or personal study.

May the liberating grace of God in Christ help us to make a difference in our country!

Horst Müller

News from the Church

1. Pastor emeritus **Horst Meyberg** passed away on 12 March 2017, aged 84. He was buried in Kroondal.

After studying Theology in Hermannsburg, Germany, he was ordained in Kroondal, South Africa in 1959. He served the congregation for a few months before becoming pastor in Bodibe, ELCSA Western Diocese, followed by Bethel as school pastor.

In 1983 he became pastor in Vanderbijlpark. In 1989 the ELM appointed him as their senior for Southern Africa, until his retirement.

Since then he has been helping out in many congregations, but especially in Pretoria, right to the end. We thank God for the blessing that he could be to many, and the blessings that he himself received during his life. We pray for his wife, Hildegard, his children and grand-children. May they experience the comfort of the Lord in this time.

2. Dean **Ron Küsel** has been taking care of the German Seemen’s Mission in Durban on a half post since 1 April. This became necessary with the early return of Deacon **Hans-Werner Caspar** due to ill health. As from 1 July Dean Küsel will then share the post with the half post of the new Durban Congregation. Initially his task is to investigate where and of what nature this new congregation should be, and then lead the process of founding it.

3. **New Germany congregation** will then become vacant as from 1 July. The plans are that **Martin Büttner**, after passing his examinations at the end of July, will come as pastor-coll to that congregation.

4. Please also pray for **Martin Büttner** and **Martha Weich** who will be doing their **2nd theological examination** on **27 and 28 July 2017**. We trust that they will complete all tasks successfully and then can be ordained. Martha Weich will then go into the inland parish in the Eastern Cape, based in Stutterheim.

5. Pastor **Michael Diezun** is returning to Germany at the end of June 2017. With that the **Midrand and Kelvin** congregations become vacant. The process of filling the post has started.

6. Pastor **Olaf Gieseke**'s term of office comes to an end in the second half of this year. With that the **Evangelical Lutheran Church on the East Rand** becomes vacant. There too the process of filling the post has commenced.

Plases keep these congregations in your prayers.

We thank pastors Gieseke and Diezun for the years of service in ELCSA (N-T), in their congregations, but also in other commissions of the Church. They both arrived as singles and return with a spouse. May the homecoming/emigration go well, and their wives settle in well in their new homes.

7. The **Song Festival** in Wartburg was a wonderful occasion. Almost 200 choristers and 500 congregants shared the morning of worship, reflection and music. A hearty thanks to Wartburg and the neighbouring congregations, all musicians and the team that planned the event!

8. **Synod 2017**: Most Synod delegates have been elected and are now receiving information and material to prepare themselves. We urge congregations to arrange for an information session with their representatives, who will then inform you on what synod will be dealing with. This can be either done at a congregation evening or after a Sunday service. Please pray for your delegates and for Church Council as we prepare for this important event.

9. **“The South Africa we pray for”** - This initiative of the South African Council of Churches is continuing and gaining momentum. In our challenging times in South Africa it is important that the Church community plays an active role in guiding the nation towards a healthy future. Prayer is one important aspect, and information on what needs to be addressed in our nation the other. Please keep this in your prayers!

10. On **27 August 2017** all **Lutherans in South Africa** are invited to a big Reformation service in Pretoria at the show grounds. It would be wonderful if our congregations are well represented!