



Bishop's Post

December 18-January 19

When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. Matthew 2,10

I am writing this letter at the end of a meeting with the strange title: "Meeting

of bishops of various churches." Indeed, the initial impression was strange. Almost like in a movie, there was an assortment of hats, hoods and habits, with bishops from seven continents and 20 churches such as Coptic, Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Lutheran.

However, what we all had in common, could be summed up by the watchword for December: "When they saw the star..." - we all were following Christ.

At the manger the magi from the East and the shepherds from Bethlehem's fields gathered to worship Christ.

In the same way we could bring our gifts and our praise to Christ the Lord.

At the same time, it was also painful, for when it was time to receive the gift that Christ gives to us: His body and his blood, the age-old rifts between the followers of Christ became all too visible.

Depending on who served communion, some would hold out their hands and receive, others would cross their arms to receive only a blessing.

What should I do? I asked myself: Who is the host? Whose table are we gathering at? Is it not the table of the Lord? Is it not the body and blood of Christ that we are receiving? Is it not Christ himself who says: Come, take, eat, drink? Are those who officiate the hosts, or merely the butlers and waiters, serving the guests on behalf of the Host?

And so, I did hold out my hand, I did receive the bread, the cup.

I realised, how strange it is that we all confess that Christ is Saviour of the universe, that we can all together bring our gifts to him - gold, frankincense, myrrh - but when it comes to HIM giving HIS gifts to us, we become quite selective. Brothers and sisters in Christ suddenly turn into nieces and nephews, step-brothers and step-sisters or only very distant relations.

The world needs to see that there is only one Christ, one Saviour, and although those who worship him range from simple shepherds to ornate magi, there is only one gift of God, one Christ, given for all. Although the gifts that we bring him vary from simple praise to age old intricate liturgies, his gift to us is ... he himself.

During the coming weeks Christmas will be celebrated in myriad ways, some treasured and familiar to me, others totally strange. But it is the same Lord Jesus Christ that we celebrate, that we bow before. Rather than shoving and pushing others away, I want to marvel at the fact that millions, and millions of people from across the globe are overjoyed by this amazing gift, Christ, the Son of God!

Host Müller

News from the Church

Randolph Kassier, Jan Duvenhage and Christoph Höcht passed their final examinations in October. Jan will be ordained on 13 January in Gerdau/Hakboslaagte, Randolph on 20 January in Vanderbijlpark. Christoph is taking on the post of chaplain in the Johanneum in Wuppertal, Germany.

On 4 November the **Lutheran Congregation Dolphin Coast** was officially founded, with the founding church service on 25 November, including the induction of Pastor Ron Küsel and the first congregational council. May the Lord bless this young congregation and lead it into a future to His glory!

"What's in a Name?"

When the ELCSA (Transvaal) and ELCSA (Hermannsburg) became one in 1981, the name chosen was ELCSA (Natal-Transvaal) based on the two provinces that the Church was working in.

After 1994 we suddenly found ourselves working in five provinces: Northwest, Limpopo, Gauteng, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal.

Synod at that stage resolved in keeping just the abbreviation (N-T).

Over the years it became clear that this is not a permanent solution. Those with historical knowledge still refer to us as "Natal-Transvaal". Others want to know what (N-T) stands for. However, the majority of errors happen due to us being referred to as "ELCSA" - confusing us with the church that has only ELCSA as name. This results in letters, phone calls, inheritances and legal issues landing on our door step instead of ELCSA's, and vice-versa.

Church Council therefore invites all our members to go on a new "name search" for our Church. In your thinking, consider what should be in the name? Points to consider:

- Evangelical in its intention means: Based on the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the South African context, it is also used for fundamentalist churches and groupings.
- Lutheran refers to our Reformation roots, based on the teachings of Martin Luther
- SA refers to Southern Africa (not only South Africa)
- Can a new abbreviation have a meaning on its own, instead of just being an abbreviation? Example: The Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of Southern Africa = REACH-SA

Currently the following names are in use in our region:

ELCSA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa); ELCSA (Cape Church)
UELCSA (United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa); FELSISA (Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa); LCSA (Lutheran Church in Southern Africa);

and in Namibia: ELCRIN (Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia); ELCIN; ELCIN/GELC (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia/German Evangelical Lutheran Church)

Please submit suggestions (with explanation) to bishop@elcsant.org.za by 1 March 2019.

The matter will then be discussed at Synod 10-13 October 2019