



BISHOP'S  
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*“They are shameful gluttons, serving their stomachs, who should rather be looking after pigs and dogs than being counsellors and pastors!”*

Martin Luther writes these very harsh words in the preface to the large catechism, 1529. But he is not only worried about poorly trained pastors. The whole schooling system in Germany had collapsed with the closure of monasteries and the associated schools. Boys and girls were abandoned to their fate.

In quite a few of his writings Luther addresses this issue. He urges rulers and city councils to establish good schools and to make schooling compulsory.

Frankly, I am glad that I do not need to speak so harshly about our pastors. We are, however, in the process to reformulate guidelines for theological education. This has become necessary due to the drastic decline in the standard of schooling in our country.

Although 70% of matriculants pass their matric, only 13% achieve marks that are good enough to study at university. Even worse, 60% of all learners never make it beyond grade 9.

Can we as Church do anything about this? We are already, at least to some extent. The few Church - and congregation schools perform way above the average for the country. In fact, our Church School, Hermannsburg, regularly is amongst the top Schools in respect of Matric results.

We need to support these schools and ensure that they can continue to exist, and where possible to expand, or to start new school projects.

And then we should really put a huge emphasis on the schooling of our own children and grandchildren.

We should take time to read to them, and instil in them a love for reading. Furthermore we should ensure that they receive good quality schooling (keeping in mind that more expensive does not necessarily mean better quality). We need to accompany them during their schooling, so that they have a solid foundation as they enter adulthood. But there is a bigger challenge. Thousands of young children grow up in poverty and are already lagging behind when they enter school. The deficit then just continues to grow. There are a few instances where members of our Church address this issue. Some farmers' wives have started pre-schools for the children on their farm. A city congregation is involved in a home work centre, where children receive help after school to develop their academic skills. One congregation has established a pre-school for underprivileged children of the community.

Although all these are very small steps in view of the extent of the problem, for those Children who benefit, it is life-changing.

“Let the Children come to me”, Jesus said, “for to such as these belongs the kingdom of God”

These words were spoken in a time and culture where little Children did not achieve much attention. Teachers saw them as nuisance and chased them away. But Jesus takes a different approach. These young children have their lives ahead of them. They are extremely impressionable and shapeable. If they are not shaped by us, by the gospel and the mindset of Jesus, they will be shaped by other influences - or lack thereof.

That is why Luther places such a huge emphasis on good education.

Let us too become involved or more involved in this!

### *News from the Church*

On 29 March 2014 Prof. Dr **Gunther Wittenberg** passed away shortly before his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday. As a young pastor the United Ev.Luth. Church in Southern Africa commissioned him to plan and start our own

theological training. This he managed to do well, and led the process till his retirement. Through this work he also had a significant impact on the theological faculty of the University in Pietermaritzburg. We thank God for his service, and pray for comfort and strength for his wife Monika and family.

**Bethanien Congregation** has elected dean **Dirk Köstlin** as their new pastor. Therefore **Vryheid** congregation has commenced the process of finding a successor for the beginning of 2015.

The **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy** had invited **UELCSA** to be present at their Synod in Naples. Bishop Horst Müller attended. The **ELKI** is a predominantly German Church, but like **ELCSA (NT)** very much in the process of becoming indigenous, whilst being a minority Church. That then is the major reason for this interaction. We want to see what we can learn from and with each other, and whether there are topics that we can mutually deal with. There is a strong likelihood that young people from our Church could do a volunteer year in Italy. Another possibility is for congregations in similar situations to link up with each other.

Vicar **Frank Schütte** returned back from Germany (Saxony) with his wife Nina and son Lars at the end of May. He is now preparing for his final theological examination, planned for mid-August. After successful completion he will be ordained on 19 August in the **Johannes** congregation, Pretoria. From there he will then relocate as Pastor-coll to **Augsburg**. Please remember him in your prayers!

We thank retired pastor **Helmut Dedekind** and his wife Christa for helping out in Augsburg. They return to Germany early in June.

The Evangelical Church in Germany (**EKD**) offered to co-fund a project in Gauteng, reaching out to Germans living in that area. The hope is to

also integrate them into a congregation. The EKD funds 80% of the personnel costs, and Northrand, congregation, who will host the program, 20%.

Pastor **Katrin Zürn-Steffens** will be the pastor of the project on a full time basis. Let us pray to God to bless this work.