



Lutheran Youth Mission, ELCSA (N-T)

KZN Youth

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KZN Youth Report 2011

1. Reflection on the KZN Youth Ministry 2009-2011

It has been over 2 years since I was appointed youth pastor of KZN. Many of the activities that have made up our youth ministry for years now have continued much as before:

Regional Camps – our regular youth camps continue to be a core emphasis of our ministry. We have several camps for different age-groups during the winter holidays:

- **Children's Kailager** for the age group 8-12. This takes place at the Kailager near Port Edward. This camp has become smaller over the last few years – it seems that parents are less willing to send their young children on such camps. Given the feedback we receive each year and our own experience – my son attended the camp for the first time this year, together with several pastors' children – I can only encourage parents to make the most of this opportunity and send their children on such camps. It is an opportunity for personal and social growth, something which is already vital for our young children, not only the older ones! The Augsburg congregation has adopted this camp over the years and we thank them sincerely for their financial assistance and the leadership they have provided. Special thanks go to Jens and Thea Küsel who have led this camp for the last two years.
- **KT Camp** for the age group 12-16, with a special focus on Confirmands. This camp also takes place at the Kailager. The KZN youth pastor leads this camp and is assisted by theology students, volunteer leaders and sometimes other pastors. In the last few years this camp has shown itself to be a "feeder" camp for our main camp, the Rüstwoche in December. It is also a wonderful opportunity to develop camp leaders at a smaller camp where the main leaders have more personal contact with a smaller group of leaders. The attendance at this camp has ranged between 40 and 70 over the last 3 years.
- **Winter Outreach** for the age group 17 and older. This Outreach always took place towards the end of these holidays and was planned in conjunction with different congregations in our region and beyond (including Nelspruit and Namibia over the past few years). For the last two years this Outreach has had to be cancelled due to lack of participants. There seem to be various reasons for this, the most influential being the fact that the Winter holidays are up to 2 weeks shorter than they used to be! We have discussed this issue at length in the youth council and have decided to replace this Winter Outreach with a camp for Young Adults over a long weekend in September. This age group (those who have left school already) has not been adequately catered for in our regional youth work – they have really only been able to participate as leaders at our camps. This new camp aims to address this. For the short-term future we will only have one Outreach per year (with the Rüstwoche). If that Outreach once again results in sufficient interest for another Outreach during the year, we plan to reintroduce the Winter Outreach.

The **Rüstwoche** takes place in December and caters for high school youth and students. This camp has gone from strength to strength. It includes sessions for teaching and discussions (in 3-4 groups divided according to age and language), workshops to prepare for the Outreach, a range of music opportunities (worship team, brass band and choir), quiet times each morning and a quiet day on the Thursday, hut discussions led by hut leaders, and more. We spend the Sunday to Friday in Elandskraal and then go on a weekend Outreach based in and planned with one of our congregations. In 2010 we had a total of 142 people attending this camp.

Regional Events – other annual events include:

- **A Youth Day** – this takes place every year on Easter Monday and is hosted by one of the congregations in the eastern circuit. It includes a youth service, a Bible Quiz (with a Teddy as the much sought-after trophy!), sport and a dance in the evening.
- **Weihnachtsparty** – this takes place on 26 December each year and is hosted alternately by a congregation of the eastern and southern circuits. It also includes a youth service, sport events and a dance.

These events play an important role in promoting fellowship between the different congregations of our circuits.

Youth Leadership Training – Our main leadership training weekend has always been the youth representatives meeting. This weekend provides a forum for feedback and discussion of local youth ministries, for decision-making regarding our regional youth ministry and for strategic planning and training. Several changes are planned for 2012. It has become clear that the context and needs of our two circuits differ substantially. We are therefore planning to offer two strategic planning and training weekends per year, one in each circuit, though we would still like to offer a combined weekend that brings everyone together, possibly every third year. In the last two years the youth pastor also conducted several leadership training weekends in congregations and areas of our region.

Camps at Church Festivals – for the last decade or so we have offered youth camps on weekends that coincide with church festivals (brass band and choir festivals), in an effort to encourage youth participation at these events. This has however only been the case when these festivals have taken place in our region – unfortunately the youth structures in the northern and central circuits have shown little interest in such camps. I have been in contact with Kroondal, the host of the next brass band festival, and such a weekend will be organised there. We have had between 25 and 60 participants at such youth weekends and see it as worthwhile to continue planning them. In 2012 we are also planning a trip to Germany for a youth brass band of 20 members.

2. Changes to our structures from 2011

In my 2009 report, I indicated that there would be an emphasis on the youth pastor visiting the congregations of our region. This was indeed the case for the period 2009-2010. This was of benefit to the youth pastor (who got to know the congregations) and the congregations (who got to know the youth pastor, the youth ministry and were able to discuss issues of local interest with the youth pastor). However, this approach showed itself to be unsustainable, being very demanding and time-consuming well beyond the 50% post available. After lengthy discussions, this region decided to reduce the youth pastor post to a 25% post, while reducing the responsibilities of the youth pastor to the planning and implementation of the camps and the leadership training mentioned in the previous point. It has been proposed that the congregations continue to make the same financial contributions to the KZN youth ministry as before, with the balance (which is left over after the 25% youth pastor post has been financed) to be used to finance youth hubs in specific areas of our region, which can address many of our ministry needs at a more local level. This proposal is to be finalised at this synod.

3. Finances

The congregations of our region have shown much commitment to our ministry, hosting Outreaches, sponsoring camps and providing leadership for most of our activities. I would particularly like to thank them for their financial support of our ministry. Over the last two years our 16 congregations have paid R11 000-R12 000 each to finance the youth pastor post. In addition to this we have received R75 000-R90 000 per year from thank offerings for our ministry. We use these funds to subsidise our camps, to provide material for training, music, etc. and to cover the travel, administration and other costs of our ministry. We are extremely grateful for this support and on behalf of the youth council and our ministry I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the congregations!

4. Other aspects of the church's youth ministry

Not only our congregations have shown their support for our regional ministry, the church council has also shown its support for the youth ministry of our church as a whole. They have made considerable finances available for us to upgrade and renovate the Kailager property. Anyone who has visited this campsite in the last few months will have seen how much we have been able to do with these funds. Again this is much appreciated – it has certainly added value to our camps at this site and has made them much easier to manage.

At the last synod the matter of youth representation was discussed during my report. We have taken the matter further and after several investigations and discussions have proposed to church council that, instead of providing for youth representation at synod in our constitution, they make use of 2-3 of the “appointed member” slots, whenever possible, to appoint youth or people involved in the youth ministry as members of synod. Furthermore, we have encouraged church council to invite people involved in the youth ministry as guests to synod and have undertaken to encourage youth to attend synod as guests. We are thankful that church council has done that for this synod and hope that this approach will help to make the “youth voice” heard at this important forum of our church.

5. Closing

In closing, I would like to thank the youth council for their invaluable and **voluntary** support of this important ministry of our church in this region; I would like to thank everybody who contributes towards making this ministry what it is; and I would like to thank the young people who participate and make this ministry so rewarding! We face many challenges in our local youth work – we hope that our efforts and structures will help us to tackle these. Still, our regional youth ministry is in good health and we look forward to continuing on this road and hope that the church in general and our church in particular will continue to reap the fruits of this ministry. I leave you with words whispered by Jeremiah in the middle of his trials (from Lamentations 3:24): **I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.” The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him...**