

## **Overview: Congregation Winterton**

### **Introduction**

The Lutheran Congregation in Winterton can be found in the beautiful little village called Winterton, at the foot of the majestic Drakensberg. To date the congregation has 81 baptized members. Services are held every Sunday in English, except for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month where a combined service is held with the Moorleigh congregation (alternating between the congregations) in German. The service times are: January-July at 08:30 and August to December at 10:30. The present pastor is Pastor Elke Carrhill, who serves both the congregations Moorleigh and Winterton. She was inducted into her duty of the congregations in January 2010.

The Address: P O Box 231, Winterton 3340.

### **Historical Overview**

In 1913 the first German people settled down in the farming community of Winterton, initially there were only three families. It did not take long before these families began to long for a German Church Service and these families became members of the Empangweni / Moorleigh congregation, which was 37 km away. However attending services there was not easy in those days as the only mode of transport was by horse-cart. In 1914 the first church services were held in one of the Winterton family homes. By the end of 1916 the number of German members had grown to 40.

In 1916 the idea was born to found a congregation that would be affiliated to the Empangweni congregation. This idea became a reality on the 15 July 1917, where a congregational constitution was adopted by 23 members of the community. The agreement was that the Pastors salary would be shared between Empangweni (3/5) and Winterton (2/5). At this meeting the first congregational councilors were elected: Mr L Bartels and Mr F Witthoef. The councilors were given the task to seek out a property for a church and graveyard. In 1918 a property was donated to the new congregation by a man called Jacob van der Merwe. During this year the NG congregation offered its church as a place of worship to the congregation, where once a month a service was offered by Superintendent Wiese, who lived in Moorleigh. The first funeral took place in the year 1919 and the first confirmation took place in this year too.

On the 18 May 1920 it was decided to build a church, the budget of which was R1 220.00. On the 19 June 1921 the church was consecrated. At this point there were 2 services a month offered in Winterton and the Pastor from Moorleigh would come to Winterton either by horse or by train to hold these. In 1927 the first car was purchased for the pastor and this made the service to the congregation much easier. In 1930 it was decided to have combined confirmation classes for the two congregations which took place from January to March every year in Moorleigh. Pastor Bodenstein passed away very suddenly on the 22 July 1946, which left the congregation without a pastor. Missionary Junge took over the duties of the congregation for 6 months before Pastor Hermann Hahne was transferred to serve the congregations.

Up until 1952 Winterton was associated to the Moorleigh congregation and every decision it wanted to take had to also be accepted by the mother congregation, Empangweni. The congregation longed to become independent and in 1952 this was granted and the independent congregation of Winterton was founded with the Name: Deutsche Evangelische Kirche, Winterton.

From 1958-1960, Pastor Berger offered 3 services in Winterton a month and in 1960 this work was taken over by Pastor Bodenstein who served the congregation until 1965. It was Pastor Bodenstein who initiated and prepared the building of a new church. The church was consecrated on the 17 December 1967. In January 1966, Pastor Hagedorn took over as pastor of the two congregations, Moorleigh and Winterton until 1974 when he retired. In September 1975 Pastor Krause took over as pastor until 1977 and following his service of the congregation and a time of vacancy, Pastor Reymann took on the

responsibilities from May 1980 to July 1981. In 1982 Pastor Dieter Harms came to Moorleigh and served the congregation from there till 1989. Pastor Gilbert Filter then took over the Spiritual Leadership, first as Intern and then as Pastor from 1989-1997. In 1999 the congregation again had a Pastor from Germany, Pastor Dieter Klee, who stayed with the congregation from 1999-2006. In December 2006, Pastor Wolfgang Schilling took over the congregations until his return to Germany in June 2009. In January 2010 Pastor Elke Carrihill came to serve the congregations Moorleigh and Winterton.

### **Changes and Challenges**

Being a very small congregation the challenges faced by the community are manifold. Language has been a challenge for many years, finding the right balance between the German heritage and the contemporary English influx. However, a huge shift in this regard has been made in the last years and today the work of the congregation is mainly done in English. Keeping a congregation going with such small numbers is another challenge however there is strong commitment and willingness to serve our Lord through the church. One of the developments in Winterton in the last years has been the working together of churches in the community under the banner of "Simunye". This has been a huge blessing to the church as well as to the broader community and there is a good Spirit of togetherness of Christians in the community and this strengthens the small congregation in many ways.

We continue to trust that our Lord has blessed and will blessed this congregation in this place at the foot of one of the world heritage sights: The Majestic Drakensberg.

Compiled by Elke Carrihill  
August 2011