

**Report presented at the TRC re-enactment, 8 October 2014 in Stellenbosch
by Bishops H Müller and G Filter**

Rev PB Mathe, General Secretary of ELCSA, presented a statement on behalf of ELCSA. Bishops Müller and Filter presented the following on behalf of ELCSA (NT) and (Cape):

Bishop Müller pointed out that the three Lutherans appearing together at this hearing represent the hope and frustration of these three Churches. For the past 30 years they have been engaging in talks towards unity. At two occasions everything was in place, but each time the talks fell through.

Together they then presented a

Summary of the 1998 Statement:

“We are aware that we have failed to live according to our own basic theological principle, i.e. our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the gift of His unconditional, forgiving and suffering acceptance. By accepting and enjoying the privileges of the apartheid era ourselves as members of the white society and failing to speak out sufficiently against the exploitation and suffering of the majority of the black community, we have hurt many people not only in their God-given dignity but also in their capability to cope with their daily lives, yes, by doing so, we have betrayed and denied God’s unconditional love of all people irrespective of race, class, culture, education, achievement, gender or creed.

We also realise that, in contrast to Martin Luther, the initiator of our tradition, we have failed as a church to speak out critically and boldly against overt public injustices and the abuse of power, such as the forced removal of communities from their traditional homes, job reservation, the denial of citizenship rights to blacks in the country of their birth, police brutality, the breakup of families due to race classifications, vast disparities in educational opportunities between blacks and whites or other policies which effected and hurt the human dignity.

We are aware that both as church and as individual members, we were deeply implicated in the injustices of the apartheid era as a whole and wish to put our acknowledgement and sincere regret of this fact on record.”

TRC - What happened since the 1998 statement?

“Like South Africa, our Church experienced a Rainbow period - a time of real hope, dreams of building a new South Africa, and many efforts to do so.

New ventures were started, congregations opened up, becoming bridge builders as multicultural congregations in a multicultural society.

Then followed a period of disappointment. This was caused by, amongst others,

Growing corruption

deteriorating infrastructure

Crime, especially violent crime, that goes unpunished

An education system that fails the learners and thus robs the youth of life opportunities

A health system that is not functioning, especially amongst the poor people.

All these are not issues affecting one race group only. It affects all citizens. Sadly however, the poorest of the poor are most affected.

As in the past, again our Church is silent. Members complain, but not where it makes a difference. This time the problems are not caused by laws, but by tolerating lawlessness. Our constitution is not causing this, but ignoring the constitution.

We cannot address these issues on our own. Churches together can make a difference.

But the difference will be even bigger if the religions communities can work together to face these issues. Together we present the largest part of the population. Most of the wrongdoings are committed by members of our constituencies. We as religious communities can play a significant role in the healing of our nation.

How?

We can become involved

- By reating more opportunities to tell our stories, so that we can have a better understanding and work together in a more fruitful way.
- By Building bridges - through relationships. We as leadership can be examples. And we should encourage our members to be bridgebuilders too.
- By teaching and showing respect towards each other. Again we as leaders should be examples to our constituencies.
- By Living by example - being people of Integrity. Not one of our religions condones corruption, crime, lawlessness. If we put to action what we believe, we will be people of integrity.
- By Taking responsibility - what is happening in my community? No organisation is better represented in the grass root community that the religious groups. We must encourage our members to take responsibility for what is happening in their communities and be involved in improving them.
- By providing Education - especially in the early phase. The pre-school phase is largely unregulated. How can we become involved in laying solid educational foundations in this early stage of development?
- By Teaching democracy - amongst youth and adults. We need to teach our constituencies what democracy is about, and how it can be put into practise. Loyalty to a party should not be more important than loyalty to principles and values.

In the history of South Africa there hardly ever has been a period where all citizens had the opportunity to develop their full potential. Can we work together to create a climate where this can happen?"

Questions where then put by the panel to the three delegates

We took turns to respond.