

REPORT TO THE SYNODICAL MEETING REGARDING THE CHOIRASSOCIATION

Cantate Domino canticum novum (Ps 149 Verse 1)

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Since the last Synodical Meeting in 2015, two years have passed where we have experienced the grace of our Lord, and where we could praise Him and proclaim His Name through our singing and through our music. Music, or better stated, the ability to perform music is a gift from our Lord to all people. Music can reach people deep inside the mind and soul. It is good to people.

This great gift from our Lord, however puts us under an obligation that we have to cherish music and we have to practice the gift as good as it is possible for us to do. The practising of music is not limited to an exclusive small selection of people. It is there for everybody to play and enjoy!

Music gives us a medium with which we can communicate. We can proclaim our beliefs to the world, but we can also talk to God in music. For Martin Luther, music was the medium with which the congregation was answering to the word of God. Through the beauty of music, we are forced to listen.

Music brings people together. This we experience in our church, where we combine various cultural groups to sing and praise together in everybody's language (as far as it is possible to us). Nobody is excluded!

Our Choir association is divided into 3 Circuits, i.e.:

Southern Circuit:

Wartburg, Hermannsburg, Harburg, New Hanover, Pietermaritzburg, Bethanien.

In Durban the region, we hope that a new choir will be established. Through the combining of the congregations, it appears to us that a viable group has been gathered to start a choir.

Central Region:

Piet Retief (Markus), Augsburg, Braunschweig, Vryheid (Michaelis).

Northern Circuit:

Gerdau, Kroondal, Pretoria-East (Johannesgemeinde), Midrand, Church of Peace, Germiston

Some congregations operate their choirs on a "project basis". This means that the choirs only exist for Christmas, Good Friday and Easter, or when a special occasion requires a choir, and when the students are back from their Universities. We encourage these congregations to take the step and make the choir. Everybody receives only blessings from our Lord by singing in a church choir!

Although it appears that the numbers are declining, we could hold an awesome choir festival with about 180 Choristers and a congregation of more than 500 guests. In preparation for the festival it has proven that regional rehearsals are beneficial, a necessity and motivate the singers. It was a real pleasure to hold these rehearsals, and it was wonderful to get acquainted with the choirs in the regions.

We extend a great word of thanks to the congregation of Wartburg and Pastor Udo Lütge for all the hard work in preparation for the festival. It was a pleasure to sing in the hall, and their hospitality to choristers was exemplary! May God bless you for all your hard work!

The Choir Festival followed the Theme of 500 years of Reformation with a normal service. We were greeted by Bishop Tswaedi of LUCSA, as well as Bishop Reinstorf of the FELSISA in a written message.

After the service, the 3 "Solos" sola fide, sola gratia, sola scriptura, were presented to the congregation with Hymns and Motets.

Lindie Hartmann and Christel Küsel were inducted as Regional Leaders for the Circuits North and Central. We wish them the blessing of Christ on their work in the Circuits.

We have sadly heard of the passing of our previous Conductor and Spiritual Leader, Mrs Maria Hillermann. Not only was she a great musician and leader, but she gave guidance where help was requested. And we all know that she prayed for our work and held it close to her heart. Till the last Choir Festival she had re-written the music so that we could print a book for each Choir Festival. We remember her with a thankful heart to our Lord that he had given Maria to us as a leader and as a friend. May she rest in the Hands of our Lord, to whom she had devoted her life.

Looking into the future, there are 3 aspects that come to mind. In the last report we have informed about training for aspirant conductors. This aspect has been developed to the point where we want to meet with the FELSISA to jointly offer courses for conductors and organists. We have had contact with Director (LKMD) Martin Leidenberger from the SächsischeLandeskirche concerning assistance in the development and presentation of the training courses. LKMD Leidenberger expressed his keen interest in the programme, and we hope that the first courses will be presented next year. Some developmental work in the presentation of the courses is still required, but our experience in the presentation of courses for the brass band association will be of great benefit. Some work will be done by Local Music Teachers, while some subjects will be presented by experts from Germany. It is important that we establish the contact with Germany, so that we stay abreast with the latest development. If you always do what you always have done, then you get what you always have gotten! Parallel to the conducting courses, we shall offer a course for organists following a request from the congregations for such training.

The Choir Association has decided that as from next year, a membership fee will be levied to pay for the programmes being developed and the travelling of the office bearers of the association. We hope that the congregations will pay this for the singers.

Thirdly, we see that our choirs are ageing. We need to take cognisance of the fact that we have lost a generation of singers in virtually all congregations. The reasons are very varied. We have to actively invite the younger persons to sing in a choir. It is so, that if nobody sings, then there will be no song! Very simple! We need to invite our children to take up music – piano, strings, brass instruments, etc. if we wish to have music in our churches in the near future. Especially the young and the first-time performers need a lot of encouragement and support. From the point of the Choir Association, we shall include more music in future Choir Festivals that can be performed by smaller choirs. A new book that can be used by all has been recommended to be purchased. This is quite a hefty expense but should be a benefit to all choirs and congregations.

Lastly, we thank our Lord for giving us the opportunities and the abilities to serve him with music. We thank him for the gift of music as such and the vast volume of church music compositions that we can perform. We pray that He will open our hearts to His calling to be in his service!

W G Johannes
Conductor

Pastor Udo Lütge
Spiritual Leader/Chairman