

Report of the Programme Facilitator to Synod of ELCSA (N-T)

August 2017

1. Introduction

I was appointed in the facilitator post at half-post level, the other half being a pastor's post at St Peter, Pretoria, from 1 January 2016, with this arrangement being limited to a two year period.

I thank the Church Council for the trust in me to appoint me to this post, and for support and advice during this period. I especially thank Bishop Horst Müller for guidance, advice and good working together.

After an initial period of evaluation, the work of the post focussed on three areas, as listed below.

2. Work done

a. *eEquip*

With Horst Müller, I prepared, led, and held part of the inputs at the eEquip retreats in January 2016 and January 2017, and am at present involved in preparations for eEquip 2018. In 2017, Volker Keding and Peter Nagel also contributed in the inputs, while in 2017 Rüdiger Lutz and Dieter Lilje made contributions. Marianne von Delft led the music, and Elsa Schärf and Mika Nkuna took care of the children. To all of them, my heartfelt gratitude!

In 2016, the theme was 'Growing through challenges'. 29 people participated, ranging in age from 4 to 81. In 2017, with the theme 'Grace for you – eQuipped to reform', 46 people took part, ranging in age from 2 to 82. Both retreats were, according to the feedback, valuable and of help in spiritual and personal growth to those who were there.

In order to increase awareness, Bp Horst Müller and I visited congregations in the Eastern and Southern circuit, introducing some of the themes for eEquip and inviting people to come and see for themselves. Attendance at these congregational evenings varied, but there seemed to be some effect in terms of increased participation in eEquip.

b. *Reformation Commemoration Year*

The focus of my time for 2017 was the Reformation Commemoration year. For this, I engaged in following activities:

- Resources

After some investigation, resources such as DVDs, course materials, a poster series, and background information compilations were selected, ordered and made available to the congregations of our church. These continue to be available.

I also circulated Luther quotes for most of the prescribed sermon texts throughout the year.

The Poster series 'Here I stand' was sourced and laminated and put on display at a number of congregations.

- All-Lutheran Service

I took part in, and to some extent led, the committee that prepared for the All Lutheran Reformation Service. The encounters of the various participants in the planning were, in itself, a blessing in

establishing relationships across the divides of our churches. At the time of writing, the service itself is still in the future.

- Gasthaus Ökumene

On invitation from the EKD, a group of five members from ELCSA (N-T) represented our church at the Ecumenical Inn in Wittenberg, Germany, from 8 to 15 August. I led the preparations for this group, and accompanied the group on its journey. Our presence and presentations were well received, and it was an experience in which we were enriched, and could enrich others.

- Ecumenical Conversations

With Bp Horst Müller, I participated in ecumenical conversations around the reformation commemorations, focussing on the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, and involving Catholic, Methodist, Reformed and Anglican churches. A statement was prepared, and various encounters between the churches were organised.

c. *Training generally*

I participated in, or led, a number of training activities

- Co-worker Training

On behalf of the Northern and Eastern Circuits, I organised and presented sessions in the two years for co-worker training. Attendance seemed to grow at these sessions in the last year.

- Discussions around the Study Commission Paper on Homosexuality

I presented inputs on this at the Eastern Circuit, the Eastern Parish and the Namibian Pastors Conference. In all cases, the reception was varied.

- Ecumenical meetings

I represented ELCSA (N-T) in meetings of the SACC, LUCSA, WCC Faith and Order Commission.

3. Structure and support

During these two years, costs and support were shared between the St Peter congregation and ELCSA (N-T). I lived in the St Peter manse, but used a vehicle provided for by ELCSA (NT). Costs were shared.

In the initial period, a record of estimated work hours was kept, with the result that, while more time was devoted to work in the congregation, an appropriate amount of time was spent on facilitator activities.

I am grateful for the opportunity given to serve the church in this capacity, and reiterate my thanks to Church Council, Bishop and Office Staff for their support.

Detlev Tönsing