



BISHOP'S POST



“Pray for us ... “ (Col 4,2)

Emergency situation for the young Church - the founding missionary has been imprisoned, detention without trial. Will this then be the end of the rapid spread of the gospel of Christ? Everybody is praying that this injustice will come to an end, that he will be released.

His letter arrives, smuggled out of prison. He requests their prayer. Of course, we are praying! But then comes the surprise. He does not pray for release. Rather he says: Pray for us that the Lord will open a door for the proclamation of his word!

In his thinking, prison is not an abrupt halt to his mission work but a new direction. Never would he have chosen to go to prison. But now he is there, and so the commission continues - behind prison walls. “Pray that the Lord will open a door *in prison!*”

Church history bears testimony to the fact that imprisoned Christians contributed significantly to the rapid spread of early Christianity.

Many of our congregations experience “prison” in a different way. Lack of finances and co-workers, quarrels, shrinking numbers, vacancies stifle the congregation. They are like a prison, interrupting the life and growth of the congregation. We pray: Lord, please help! Help us out of this financial mess, send us a pastor, make the people willing to become involved.

The lesson that I learn from Colossians 4 is that the work does not only continue once the problems have been solved, the “prison” is behind us. Christ is at work even *in* these prison times. “Lord, open a door, so that, whilst we are in this difficult situation, your word will spread”.

For Paul prison did not mean “business as usual”, but rather: “business, but unusual”. I pray that God will open our eyes so that difficult times will not be an interruption or even a stand still of our calling, but rather lead to a new and different approach to spread the gospel. May he open our eyes to see the open door in “prison”, and the courage to act on it!

News from the Church:

1. The current UELCSA students (Anneliese Menne, Adolph van der Walt, Matome Sadiki and Heidrun Tobler) are each individually continuing their studies at different universities in

Germany. No new students have registered for this year. Thus, for the first time in many years there are no UELCSA students in Pietermaritzburg. Our Church is currently re-defining the details of what is required from students who wish to be ordained in our Church. These will be presented to UELCSA Synod meeting in May 2012 in Cape Town. This synod will extensively deal with theological training.

2. At the end of February Church Councils of our Church and the Cape Church had our first combined meeting. As a next step



each Church Council will define how it sees future co-operation.

- 3.

Congratulations to Bishopstowe-Pietermaritzburg, celebrating the centenary of their founding congregations Bishopstowe (Hermannsburg) and Pietermaritzburg (Berlin) on 18 March.

4. Our Church is having it's bi-annual brass band festival in Kroondal on 13 May. I hope that large numbers, not only musicians, will congregate and celebrate that day!

5. During April and May this year we celebrate most significant days of our Church year. We think of the suffering and death of Christ for our sins. Then we celebrate his resurrection and victory over death and evil, for our salvation. Pentecost reminds us that we are never left to fend for ourselves, but that the Holy Spirit guides and strengthens us. May all these festivals encourage us, so that we, like Paul, can pray confidently: Lord, open doors for your Word!

Your brother in Christ,
Horst Müller