



ROM 2:16



Bishop's Post February March 2017

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right." Acts 10,34&35

The First Reformation

2017 - Finally it has arrived. All over the world, and especially in Wittenberg, Germany, people have been preparing for the 500 year commemoration of the Reformation.

I think it is important to consider, especially during this year, that this was not the only reformation that the Church encountered. So, during this year I would also like to reflect on some lesser known or recognized reformations. Today I start with what I regard to be the first reformation. It happened only about 5 years after the birth of the Christian Church (I regard Pentecost, AD 30, as the birthday of the Church).

Jesus, before his ascension, had commanded the disciples to go and spread the gospel to all nations. Despite this, during these first 5 years, they stuck to the people they knew: The Jews, and to the country that was their home. Even when the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem scattered them throughout the country, they continued to preach only to Jews or people converted to Judaism. In Acts 10 we read how God had to nudge Peter to cross this boundary. Verses 9-16 tell us about a vision that Peter has to prepare him for this step. He then receives the instruction by the Holy Spirit to go with strangers (17-20).

Despite this clear direction given by the Lord, verses 27-29 show that Peter remained reluctant, and quite impolite when he entered the house of the waiting Cornelius. But gradually he realises that God is at work (34,35) and ends up baptising non-Jews (44-48).

This does not result in jubilation in Jerusalem that finally the mission command is adhered to, but rather Peter is challenged by his fellow disciples (11:1-18)

I regard this event as crucial for our understanding of what Reformation is about. All too often people think it is about re-forming the Church as close to the earliest Church. But this story shows us that even this earliest Church was in need of reformation. Acts 10 is not the story of a Church gone astray, a Church

that had become godless. On the contrary. It is a Church that is burning with passion to serve Christ, led by Apostles who, for three years, have walked with Jesus and been taught by him personally. Even so, Reformation was needed. The Holy Spirit was at work, so that this first Church, after five years, becomes open to its calling. He nudges the Church, so that it becomes willing to cross boundaries, to do what was never done before: Preach Christ to non-Jews. Reformation is not about restoring the Church to its original state, but to bring it in line with its calling.

Even this first, passionate Church was in need of Reformation! Let us keep this in mind!

Yours in Christ 

News from the Church

On 22 January 2017 Pastor **Mark Meier** was inducted as pastor in **Piet Retief**. May the family settle in quickly, and may they and the congregation have a blessed journey together!

On 15 January 2017 Pastor **Remo Köhne** did his first service as Pastor on a half post in the **Church of peace, Hillbrow**. He is also in a 50% Post as school councillor at the Wings for Life school in Vanderbijlpark. We pray that he will have the necessary strength for this work-combination. May God bless him!

Vicar **Jan Duvenhage** is placed into the **Gerdau/Potchefstroom** congregations as from 1 February 2017. Dean Theo Jaeckel and Bishop em. Dieter Lilje will be his mentors. Jan studied Theology through correspondence and has been serving in Polokwane and Duiwelskloof for the past two years. With this our Church is taking a new approach to enable people from other professions to cross over and be trained towards ordination. We are grateful to Jan and the congregations for their willingness to embark on this route. May God bless them!

Dean Edwin Dedekind has accepted a post in Bendorf, a congregation of the Rhenish Church in Germany. He will commence duties there on 1 April 2017. With that **St Peters by the Lake** is becoming vacant.

We thank Dean Dedekind for the 23 years of service that he did in ELCSA (N-T). May he and his wife Elisabeth settle in well, and may the Lord bless them in their new tasks.

The **Lutherkirche** and **St Pauls** congregations in Durban have decided to close. A new congregation is to be established in the region, possibly focussing on the Dolphin Coast. This is to be combined with the work of the Seamen's Mission. Church Council has called **Dean Ron Küsel** into this new task. We hope that he can start on 1 July 2017.

The closing service for the parish is planned for 29 January 2017.

We thank God for the many years that the congregation could be a blessing to many, and for the Hillcrest congregation, that grew out of this work.

Dates to diarise

The **500 Years Reformation** commemoration brings with it many extraordinary events.

From 6-10 February the **Africa Pre-assembly** of Lutheran Churches takes place in Johannesburg. This is followed by the **12th General Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation** from 10-16 May in Windhoek.

The **Song festival** of our Church is planned for 7 May 2017 in Wartburg. This will also be the main celebration of our Church in view of the Reformation.

A combined service of all Lutherans is planned for 27 August 2017 in Pretoria.

Our **Synod** will take place from 14-17 September in Hermannsburg.

There are many more and smaller events happening in various regions involving circuits or single congregations.