



BISHOP'S
Aug 16 **POST** Sept 16



What made them survive?

As we were approaching Istanbul, suicide gunmen attacked the airport. Our flight was diverted to Ankara. We were safe. 44 People died at the airport. Violence, killing of innocent people - we live in sad times.

I was returning from my study leave, where I was investigating a reformation movement 340 years older than the Lutheran Church. Theirs is a history with much more violence than that in Istanbul.

Round about 1176 a small number of Christians in Lyon, France, took a radically new approach to their faith. They followed the command of Jesus in Luke 10 and Matthew 10 literally, and went out, two by two, without any security, only depending on the kindness of others. "Poor of Christ" they called themselves - not to indicate that they had given up all wealth, but that they relied on Christ.

They preached the gospel, taught the Bible in the regional dialect, helped the sick. They were well received. The priests often were distant from the people and their needs. The Church constantly demanded money - these Poor of Christ helped, refused money and only accepted hospitality for themselves.

The Church hierarchy saw its authority undermined by these lay preachers, and prohibited them from preaching. They only knew one Church, and were loyal to it. They decided to approach the pope himself for permission to preach. His authority overruled that of bishops and priests, and he was known to grant lay people on crusades permission to preach and perform priestly tasks.

A small delegation, led by Valdes, the founder, travelled to Rome and indeed got permission from pope Alexander III to preach - subject to the local bishop's approval - which was denied.

The next pope, Lucius III, was less kind to them. They were excommunicated and declared heretics.

This was the beginning of three hundred years of persecution. Yes, three hundred years. Despite the harshness of the persecution and the almost universal might of the Church, the movement spread rapidly from the Mediterranean to the Baltic sea.

The full force of the Inquisition was mobilised against them. Inquisitors devoted their lives to sniffing them out and executing those who did not recant. Yet, they did not succeed. Generation after generation of Christians

continued following Christ in this way, albeit in secrecy, whilst healing and helping openly.

Why did they survive despite the persecution? Where did their strength lie? I invite you to join in the discussion and give your opinion on the matter. Send your thoughts to bipo@elcsant.org.za

More information on this movement can be found at <http://www.museeprotestant.org/en/notice/a-history-of-the-waldensians/> or <http://www.bibliografia-valdese.com>

Host Müller

News from the Church

1. Pastor **Remo Köhne** was elected by the Church of Peace congregation in Hillbrow to commence his duties there in January 2017. With this the Vanderbijlpark congregation becomes vacant. May the Lord guide the process of filling that post.

2. Pastor **Michael Diezun** of the Kelvin/Midrand congregations and **Pastor Olaf Gieseke** of Eastrand both have been granted an extension on their work visas until July 2017. Thank you for your prayers in this regard!

3. Pastor **Thomas Wojciechowski**, Manager of the Outreach Foundation in Hillbrow finally received his work visa, and could return to his post in May. We thank God for that!

4. **Pastors Katrin Zürn-Steffens and Heiko Zürn** returned to Germany at the end of July. With this the Thomas congregation in North Rand has become vacant. We thank them for their service in our Church and pray that they will settle in soon.

5. The **General Pastors Convention** of ELCSA (N-T) and the Cape Church takes place from 18 to 23 September in Red Acres, Pietermaritzburg. Please pray that the Lord will bless this meeting and all of us!

6. On a personal note: I wish to thank all who stood in during my study leave between May and August: my deputy, Dean Theo Jaeckel, the other deans and the staff at Head Office: thank you very much!

7. **Are you called to become a pastor?** Please speak to your pastor about it. The Church is offering bursaries to assist prospective full time students. The University of Stellenbosch is the preferred place to study.