



**Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (N-T)
Report by Church Council to Synod 2019
“Go- with purpose”**

1 **Introduction**

2 As in 2017, a planning team was asked to brainstorm and suggest a theme for synod. Each
3 circuit was invited to nominate one synod delegate and an additional young person onto the
4 team. “Go - with purpose” was the final suggestion.

5 Go - we as Church are on the way, and supposed to be on the way. However, one can be busy,
6 one can be on the way, without knowing whereto, or why.

7 This theme wants to challenge us to ask: Why are we moving, and to where are we moving?
8 Part of the preparation for synod is the 10 year challenge that was sent to all congregations
9 asking: Where do you see yourselves 10 years from now?

10 At Synod there will be a display of the responses received, and during synod we hope to develop
11 these inputs further and build on them.

12 eQuip 2020, annual ELCSA (N-T) retreat held in Hermannsburg KZN, will also continue
13 dwelling on this topic.

14 Our hope is that the theme of synod will continue to challenge us not to become stagnant, nor to
15 be active without purpose and direction. We are not called to exist, but to live!

16 **Overview of the period 2017-2019**

17 **1 Personalia**

18 **1.1 Deaths**

19 It is good to remember those who served in the Church and have passed away. It is
20 hurtful when someone special to me then is not mentioned. In this report we mention
21 only those who served in ELCSA (N-T) office or Church Council. They, however, stand
22 for a much larger number of people who passed away in the reporting period, who
23 served as synod delegates, or in various functions in their congregations. We thank God
24 for the contributions that they could make.

25 Alex Wustrow (1983 -1987) and Berthold Küsel (1983-1999) served as lay members of
26 Church Council. Hilde Dachs was bookkeeper of ELCSA (N-T) from 2007 - 2010. We

27 are grateful for the role that they could play on Church level, and pray for peace and
28 comfort for their loved ones. (Moment of silence in Remembrance of all those who
29 passed away)

30 1.2 New Pastors in Service

31 We welcome the following pastors into ELCSA (N-T)

32 **Martin Büttner** completed his theological training which he started whilst being the
33 Youth Deacon in the Northrand congregation. He is now serving as Pastor- Coll in New
34 Germany congregation, Durban. The congregational council has proposed to the
35 congregation to elect him as their new pastor. The General meeting for that purpose is
36 planned for 24 August 2019.

37 **Jan Duvenhage** studied theology on a part time basis and helped out in Polokwane. In
38 2016 he started serving Concordia Congregation in Hakboslaagte, Northern Circuit,
39 while preparing for his final theological examination in October 2018. Upon passing, the
40 congregation elected him to serve the congregation. He was ordained and inducted on 13
41 January 2019.

42 **Randolph Kassier** studied theology on a part time basis whilst farming in the Free
43 State. During this time he also served as lay preacher in the Methodist Church. In 2017
44 he started working on a part time basis in Vanderbijlpark at our Vaal Triangle
45 congregation, while preparing for his second theological examination, which he passed
46 in October 2018. The congregation then elected him as their pastor, and he was ordained
47 and inducted on 20 January 2019.

48 **Jack Magoro** was ordained as a pastor in ELCSA, Northern Diocese. When Midrand
49 and Kelvin congregations in the Central Circuit became vacant, he was encouraged by
50 congregants to apply for the post, which he did. After doing a successful colloquium
51 (discussion with a candidate from outside of UELCSA, to establish appoint ability) the
52 congregations elected him as their pastor. His wife still works as pastor in ELCSA,
53 which is a challenge, since the respective places of work are 200 km apart.

54 **Peter Molchin** had been a pastor in ELCSA (Cape) since his ordination. He was elected
55 as pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the East Rand, Johannesburg, where he
56 hopes to serve till his retirement.

57 **Nicole Otte-Kempf** came as pastor to the Johannes Congregation, Pretoria, seconded by
58 the EKD, from the Evangelical Church of Baden, Germany. Her term of secondment is
59 six years, till August 2024.

60 **Dieter Trümpelmann** grew up in Pretoria, but then served as pastor in the ELCSA
61 (Cape) in East London for many years. With St Peters by the Lake congregation
62 Johannesburg pastor's post becoming vacant, he applied for the post and was elected. He
63 started there in January 2018.

64 1.3 Ending of Service

65 **Heike Jakubeit** returned to Germany to fill the post as General Secretary of the Bremen
66 Mission in June 2019, after serving the St Peters congregation in Pretoria for 6 years.
67 She was seconded from her Church of Oldenburg, via the EKD.

68 **Christian Nottmeier** completed his secondment to Johannesgemeinde, Pretoria, after
69 serving there for 6 years. He was elected as Superintendent in Berlin, and started serving
70 in that position upon his return in April 2018.

71 1.4 **Retirements**
72 During the reporting period **Andreas Wernecke** retired after 35 years serving as a
73 pastor, of which 6 years were a secondment to Germany. We thank him for the years of
74 service and trust that he and Marianne will have a blessed retirement in their new home
75 in the Eastern Cape.
76

77 **2 Congregations**

78 2.1 **Changes in congregations:**
79 Founding of the **Lutheran Congregation Dolphin Coast (LCDC)**. As reported in 2017,
80 Pastor Ron Küsel was tasked to investigate the viability and nature of a possible new
81 congregation in the Durban region. As a result, the LCDC was founded on 25 November
82 2018, a congregational council elected and Pastor Ron Küsel inducted as pastor of that
83 congregation. The pastor's post continues on a 50% shared basis with the German
84 Seafarers' Mission in Durban. Subsequently a house was bought in Ballito, serving as
85 manse, and, after a short period of renting a small hall (Lion's Club) a longer lease was
86 signed for a building used as place of worship. It is pleasing to see that many visitors to
87 the Dolphin Coast are attending the LCDC services.

88 **Merging of Harburg, Wartburg, New Hanover into the United Evangelical**
89 **Lutheran Congregation (UELC)** After a previous attempt in the 1990's failed to unite
90 these three congregation, a new process was started by the congregations themselves. In
91 depth investigations were done as to the viability, desirability and practicability of a
92 merger. This process was led by a team from all three congregations, which kept Church
93 Council updated on the progress. The process ended in the dissolution of the three
94 congregations and the establishing of a new entity, with its main seat in Wartburg. A
95 worship centre / hall was built and dedicated on 28 July 2019. Pastors Udo Lütge and
96 Rolf Schmidt were elected to serve the UELC.
97 We commend the three congregations for taking charge of this process, and the
98 thoroughness with which it was followed through.

99 The pastor's post of **Verden-Dundee** has been vacant since the retirement of Pastor
100 Werner Harms in 2011. Currently the congregation is in discussion with Uelzen
101 congregation of FELSISA and their pastor, Marlon Hiestermann to request him to be
102 care taker pastor of Verden-Dundee. The Church Councils of FELSISA and ELCSA (N-
103 T) and the respective bishops are busy formulating an interim agreement that will make
104 such a venture possible. FELSISA and ELCSA (N-T) are not in a declared church
105 fellowship. The hope is that an agreement can be reached which might lead to co-
106 operation in future as well.

107 The **Evangelical Lutheran Church on the East Rand (ELCER)** is looking at new
108 ways to operate. When established in the 1960's these were German congregations with
109 a combined membership of more than a thousand members.
110 Despite receiving support through the mission fund of ELCSA (N-T) the congregation
111 battles to meet it's obligations i.r.o. pastor's salary and Church costs. This is partly due
112 to three worship centres that need to be maintained, but also due to lack of awareness of
113 members to take responsibility of the ELCER with all its costs, especially concerning the

114 pastor's post. Subsequently the Heidelberg congregation decided to sell its buildings,
115 with an agreement to be able to continue to make use of them at times.
116 Brakpan congregation is in the process of investigating the viability of becoming an
117 independent congregation. Such a process should not be done hastily, but well
118 researched and prepared.

119 The **West Rand Lutheran Community Church (WRLCC)** has been facing serious
120 financial problems. Over years the congregation did not pay the cost of their pastor's
121 post in full, resulting in a large outstanding amount.
122 Church Council entered into discussions with WRLC Council to establish, how a way
123 forward can look. One option would be a temporal reduction of the pastoral post to 25%,
124 until the congregation can afford a full post again.
125 Congregational Council opted to declare the post vacant. Pastor Volker requested leave
126 of absence and offers his service to the congregation on a negotiated basis. His serving
127 falls under the Rules as specified in the Law on Pastors. As with any pastor who serves
128 in an ELCSA (N-T) congregation, be it as a pensioner helping out, an intern or a part
129 time pastor, the laws and oversight structures of ELCSA (N-T) apply.
130 Church Council decided to agree to this arrangement, also in view of the investigation
131 into new ways of filling pastors' posts.
132 This whole process needs to be monitored carefully, in order to see whether such a
133 system can be an alternative elsewhere too.
134 The WRLCC is also submitting a motion to Synod for debt write down, which is dealt
135 with separately.

136 **What happens when a congregation is in financial difficulties?**

137 Unfortunately quite a few congregations stop transferring the pastor's salary when finances are
138 pressing. Since the pastor is paid via ELCSA (N-T) head office, it is assumed that ELCSA (N-T)
139 has sufficient funds to carry such salaries, even when congregations do not pay. This is a
140 misconception. ELCSA (N-T) receives the contributions from congregations on a monthly basis
141 and, from there, pays the pastors' salaries and all related costs (Medical Aid, Pension, UIF).
142 When congregations withhold their payment, it has a direct and immediate effect on the reserves
143 of ELCSA (N-T), causing a ripple effect due to reduced income from interest, which then affects
144 those aspects funded mainly through interest.
145 In the past Church Council tolerated such situations for longer periods. With the decline in
146 income from Solidarity, ELCSA (N-T) does not have the capacity to absorb such under-recovery
147 any more, at least not for extended periods. For that reason different forms of ministry and
148 filling pastors' posts are being looked into, and some are tested (See 6.3 below).

149 **2.2 Placements:**

150 The **Central Circuit** has seen huge fluctuation in the last two years. At synod 2017 the
151 circuit only had 2,5 pastors out of 8 posts, with Pastor A Wernecke about to retire. Since
152 then all posts have been filled, for which we are very grateful.

153 **Evangelical Lutheran Church on the East Rand** elected Pastor Peter Molchin
154 **Vaal Triangle (Vanderbijlpark)** elected Pastor Randolph Kassier,
155 **Midrand and St Johannes in Kelvin** elected Pastor Jack Magoro,
156 **Kempton Park** elected Pastor Dieter Klee

157 **Church of Peace** in Hillbrow re-confirmed the 50% post of Dean Remo Köhne for an
158 additional period of 4 years

159 The **Northern Circuit** has seen the following changes:

160 **Concordia** at Hakboslaagte elected Pastor Jan Duvenhage

161 **Johannes congregation**, Pretoria elected Pastor Nicole Otte-Kempf

162 **St Peter's** Pretoria elected Pastor Detlev Tönsing into a full post, after he served in a
163 shared post with the ELCSA (N-T) as Program Facilitator.

164 Due to financial constraints it was decided not to fill the post that became vacant with
165 the return of Pastor Heike Jakubeit to Germany, but to investigate other options.

166 **Linked to St Peter's, the Refugee and Migrant Ministry (RMM)** was started in
167 Pretoria in January 2018 under the leadership of Pastor Rosalie Madika. This project is
168 funded by the "Evangelisch- Lutherisches Missionswerk in Niedersachsen" (ELM, also
169 known as Hermannsburg Mission) with 83%, ELCSA (N-T) Mission Committee 10%,
170 LUCSA 5% and St Peter's 2%. RMM has since resulted in the formation of a French
171 Ministry within St Peter's Pretoria.

172 **Nelspruit** congregation is vacant. The congregation cannot support a full pastor's post.
173 Alternatives need to be found here as well. We are grateful for Pastor em. Dieter Lilje
174 who continued to serve the congregation with one Sunday Service per month till the end
175 of 2018, and continues to hold services there every second month in 2019. Pastor Mark
176 Meier from Piet Retief stands in for emergencies.

177 **Polokwane and Modjadjiskloof** continue as lay-led congregations. The lay leaders are
178 participating in the co-worker training programme of ELCSA (N-T). We commend them
179 for their dedication and commitment!

180 The **Eastern Circuit** only has one vacancy, that of **Verden-Dundee**. It effectively is
181 also a lay-led congregation. The Congregational Council did a training session with
182 Bishop Müller to prepare them for this. Currently the congregation is in discussion with
183 their neighbouring FELSISA congregation to establish whether their Pastor can serve as
184 vacancy care taker. This discussion also involves the Church Councils of both Churches.

185 The **Southern Circuit** saw two exiting developments in the establishing of the United
186 Evangelical Lutheran Congregation (UELC) in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands, and the
187 Lutheran Congregation Dolphin Coast (LCDC) in Ballito. (See details under 2.1 above)

188 **3 Theological Training.**

189 At Synod 2017 we reported on the demise of the Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI)
190 in Pietermaritzburg. At that stage Bishop Gilbert Filter had already been investigating
191 the possibilities to continue our study program at the University of Stellenbosch (US).
192 Since then an agreement has been reached between UELCSA and US. Currently there
193 are two students studying via UELCSA - **Hermann Düvel** (Braunschweig), **Tristan**
194 **Krüger** (Kroondal) and one independent student, **Hans-Christoph Lange** (Pretoria).
195 Pastor Felix Meylahn from Stellenbosch, ELCSA (Cape Church) has been asked by
196 UELCSA to mentor these students on a part time basis.

197 Two students of UELCSA have opted to study at the University of Pretoria. **Jaques and**

198 **Marnus** Stadler commenced their studies in 2019.
 199 A further student, **PJ Hanekom**, currently studying in Potchefstroom is considering to
 200 become a UELCSA student.
 201 At least one further student is intending to start studying in 2020 and is in the process of
 202 registering and following the necessary steps to enrol.
 203 **Future students** are reminded that they need to get the support from their local pastor,
 204 be interviewed by their bishop and register at US timeously in order to secure a place.
 205 Once a study place has been approved, UELCSA does a psychometric analysis before
 206 completing the study contract with the student. Bursaries are available, but the student
 207 is expected to also finance part of the studies.
 208
 209 Currently there are two students studying in Germany. **Anneliese Hoffmann (Menne)**
 210 (Grootfontein) is doing her internship in Schaumburg-Lippe. Upon completing her
 211 second theological Examination, she will commence as Pastor Coll in Namibia (ELCIN-
 212 GELC).
 213 **Christa Springer** (Northrand) is continuing her studies in Tübingen.
 214
 215 It is good that after a long stretch of not having young people registering for theological
 216 studies, there now again is a good group of students in training. Praise the Lord of the
 Church!

217 **4 Institutions linked to the Church**

218 This list is by no means a comprehensive one. The institutions mentioned below are the ones
 219 where ELCSA (N-T) is a representative on the board or trustees. Many more similar projects
 220 exist within the Church, linked to local congregations or associated with them. It is wonderful
 221 to see all these initiatives. On the whole the observation is that those with close links to the local
 222 congregation are normally well run. For that reason also the existing institutions listed below are
 223 encouraged to strengthen these local ties as much as possible.

224 4.1.1 **Old Age Homes: German Seniors Residence, Johannesburg (GSR) and Altersheim 225 Port Natal (APN)**

226 The service to the seniors in our Church is of utmost importance. During the last decades
 227 numerous seniors residences and old age homes were founded by congregations,
 228 sometimes as joint ventures with other congregations. Some are functioning well, due to
 229 boards that do sterling work. Others struggle, mainly when units are standing empty. For
 230 all of these it is important that the boards/trustees are alert and ensure that the homes are
 231 run cost-effectively and provide a friendly, caring environment for the people that they
 232 serve.

233 4.1.2 **Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg (DSH)**

234 This school is one of the oldest ones in the country. It was established 160 years ago to
 235 cater for the children of missionary families, and soon also as high school for children
 236 from Lutheran Congregations. Although the Name is “Deutsche Schule”, the instruction
 237 language is English, with German offered as First Language subject. Whilst this makes
 238 it possible for any learner fluent in English to attend, it also had one major draw back:

239 The German government drastically reduced its financial support, since it is conditional
240 on a school having German as language of instruction. This reduction resulted in an
241 immediate loss of three million Rand per annum - a substantial part of the running costs
242 of the school. Since then various attempts have been made to increase paying learner
243 numbers, cost cutting through less staff etc. The crisis is far from over, and we hope that
244 somehow the school will weather this crisis and continue to offer solid foundations to
245 many generations to come. ELCSA (N-T) during the year assisted the DSH by way of
246 short term funding and supports the DSH board in its efforts and turn around strategy. It
247 continues to support the half pastor's post at the school by way of funds from the sale of
248 the Endeavour Farm.

249 4.1.3 **Lutheran Church Outreach Foundation (LCOF) Hillbrow**

250 This diaconal project also is not the only one in our Church, although the only one where
251 the Church is directly represented on the board. Currently Bishop Müller is chairperson
252 of the board, which is not an ideal situation.

253 The LCOF was established in the 1990's as a ministry of the Friedenskirche
254 congregation, in response to the rapid change in Hillbrow. Over the years it continued to
255 grow and expand, due to good funding received from the Lutheran World Federation
256 (LWF), Bread for the World and Evangelisch Lutherisches Missionswerk in
257 Niedersachsen (ELM) amongst others. The current director, Mr Robert Michel, is busy
258 strengthening the skills development section in partnership with South African
259 institutions, since indications are that funds from overseas will gradually decrease.

260 All those involved in similar projects know how much these depend on outside funding.
261 And the flow of outside funding depends on good reporting from that institution. Many
262 projects failed due to reports being sloppy or late. At the same time others flourish
263 because of the diligence with which the administration and reporting is done.

264 All those involved in such projects need to be commended - especially those that are
265 involved without payment as part of their after hours commitments. You are making a
266 difference in the lives of many!

267 **5 Inter Church Relationships**

268 5.1 **The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (UELCSA)**

269 With UELCSA no longer being involved in the Southern African Lutheran Theological
270 Training Trust (SALTTT), the main Focus now is on the Theological Education linked
271 to the University of Stellenbosch, and the training for the ministry in general. The three
272 member churches of UELCSA are ELCSA (Cape Church) ELCSA (N-T) and ELCIN
273 GELC (Namibia). UELCSA negotiated support for the new German Lectionary via the
274 German National Committee of the LWF. We are grateful that this was possible, with an
275 own contribution of 10€ per book, and are currently awaiting the deliver of these. Each
276 congregation that has regular German services will receive one such booklet and is
277 requested to pay the own contribution.

278 The next Synod of UELCSA is planned for 8-10 May 2020 in Windhoek, Namibia. At
279 that Synod we will discuss the reducing of Synod structures.

280 5.2 **Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA)**

281 Most people are aware that this, our largest, sister church is facing enormous challenges,

282 mainly as a result of the ill advised investment of all of it's reserves. This resulted in the
283 lack of funds for all church wide activities, and much unrest on all levels. After various
284 postponements, finally a General Assembly was held from 27 - 30 April 2019. During
285 this, a new Church Council, including presiding bishop, was elected. We pray that they
286 may have the wisdom and strength to deal with these challenges.
287 Perhaps due to this, there has been no official contact on Church leadership level,
288 despite various requests from UELCSA's side. With the ending of LTI, UELCSA also
289 gave up all positions in the Southern African Lutheran Theological Training Trust
290 (SALTTT), so that we are no longer in any business relationship with ELCSA. Before
291 being able to sell it's assets in Pietermaritzburg, UELCSA also had to cover outstanding
292 debt to the municipality which had arisen due to ELCSA's inability to pay these.
293 However, the bills had been issued to UELCSA for historic reasons, and therefore
294 UELCSA had to settle them.
295 The whole saga has left a bitter after taste, especially since many rumours were spread
296 that UELCSA was to blame for the demise of LTI. This is very unfortunate.
297 Despite this strained relationship, congregations are encouraged to seek co-operation
298 with their ELCSA neighbours wherever possible. There are regions with good co-
299 operation. We hope that contact on Church Council level can also be made again.

300 5.3 **Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA)**

301 A small team of two theologians from each of ELCSA (N-T) - Udo Lütge and Hugo
302 Filter, and FELSISA - Heinz Hiestermann and Karl Böhmer has been tasked to deal with
303 various topics in order to establish to what extend we can work together.
304 On congregational level there are some regions where good co-operation exists. Much
305 depends on the willingness of the clergy to engage and interact. This fact becomes clear
306 when relationships that were going well then come under strain when there is a change
307 in pastors. For that reason the pastors of ELCSA (N-T) are encouraged to go the extra
308 mile to establish good relationships, especially when changes have happened.
309 The same applies to other areas of activities, such as Church Music, where the attitude
310 of leadership plays a crucial role in building or breaking of bridges.
311 The two bishops remain committed to build bridges.
312 The co-operation between Uelzen and Verden-Dundee is referred to above (2.1).

313 5.4 **The Evangelische Stadtmission in Südafrika (ESSA)** is currently seriously looking at
314 the issue of working in more languages than just German. Just as our Church had to
315 open up to other languages, so do they in order to remain relevant.
316 Their congregation in Vanderbijlpark has shrunk to such an extend that it cannot employ
317 a pastor anymore. Good co-operation was started with our congregation, with regular
318 combined German services. For the time being, however, the ESSA congregation has
319 decided to continue to operate on its own.

320 5.5 **Lutheran World Federation (LWF)**

321 The LWF has 148 member churches in 99 countries, with about 75 Million members.
322 (<https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/member-churches>) Worldwide between three
323 and four Million people annually benefit directly from the various programs run by the
324 LWF. Whereas in the past Europe and North America had the largest Lutheran

325 Churches, this now has shifted to Africa. Ethiopia, Tanzania and Madagascar are the
326 biggest Lutheran Churches in Africa and together have almost 30% of all Lutherans
327 globally. Financially, however, the LWF still almost totally depend on the support from
328 Europe (mainly the German Lutheran Churches) and North America, both regions are
329 declining in membership.

330 Part of the work of the LWF is the **Global Young Reformers Network**, bringing
331 together young people (under 30 years of age) from across the globe - mostly by virtual
332 conferences, but also occasional real meetings. Our Church is represented by Ditebogo
333 Lebea (Formerly Midrand, now St Peters by the Lake) and Tristan Krüger (Kroondal).

334 **5.5.1 The African Lutheran Church Leadership Consultation (ALCLC)** brings
335 together the leadership from all African Lutheran Churches every three years or
336 so. In 2019 they met in Moshi, Tanzania under the topic: “Rethinking holistic
337 Mission in Africa today” Whilst the continent has the fastest growing Lutheran
338 Churches globally, it also has the largest number of refugees and displaced
339 people. How can we as church play a healing, positive role on our continent?

340 **5.5.2 The Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA)** is one of three
341 regional expressions of the LWF in Africa. Organisationally it is the best
342 developed region, with a functioning and well staffed communion office in
343 Bonaero Park. It focusses on Mission and Diakonia, especially through Aids, TB
344 and Malaria programmes, and on Christian Education, linked to Mission and
345 Diakonia, but also through the creation of work books for congregations
346 focussing on Children’s Ministry, Confirmation Handbooks, Youth Manuals and
347 Adult Ministry material. Regular training workshops are held to capacitate
348 especially lay leaders.

349 Bishop H Müller was elected President of LUCSA in 2016, and the successor is
350 elected at the triennial Assembly in Gaborone in August 2019.

351 The current Executive Director, Rev Dr David Tswaedi, is retiring in February
352 2020, and the search for a new ED is currently in progress. This post is mission
353 critical, since the ED has to ensure that all the activities happen within budget,
354 that reporting is done and future funding secured. His personal assistant, Ms Ann
355 Mokhine, who is a member of ELCSA (N-T) Church Council, will retire in 2020
356 as well, and this post will be advertised soon.

357 Although the Member Churches do pay a membership fee, the bulk of the
358 funding for all projects and salaries is received via the LWF.

359 The Assembly in Gaborone has as topic: “Listening Leadership”. Various
360 member churches have been facing severe crises, some relating to financial
361 mismanagement, others to leadership conflicts. With this topic we show the
362 importance for leadership to be connected to the grass roots and being aware of
363 what is happening in the Church that they lead.

364 **5.5.3 German National Committee of the LWF (LWF-GNC)**
365 With the integration of the “Vereinigte Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche
366 Deutschlands”(VELKD) into the EKD, two important changes were made. The
367 GNC, which up to then was fully integrated into the VELKD, became an
368 independent institution with its own, separate office. The responsibility for

369 Partner Church Relations of the VELKD was transferred to the GNC. For us it
370 did not involve change of contact persons, since Rev Christine Keim was
371 transferred to the GNC. We are grateful for the good co-operation that can
372 continue in this way. For us as ELCSA (N-T) this contact is very important,
373 since the GNC does not limit its support to German ministry. The following
374 projects were offered and made use of by us in the reporting period:

- 375 - Subsidy for German Lectionaries (reported on above)
- 376 - Wittenberg Seminar - a seminar for Lutheran Theologians from across the
377 Globe, was attended by Pastor Petra Röhrs, and before that by Pastor
378 Gertrud Tönsing.
- 379 - Lay leaders conference - a conference for lay people in church leadership
380 positions from across the globe. Mr Henning Springer, President of Synod,
381 attended this conference in June 2019, and Ms Ann Mokhine, Lay member
382 of Church Council, the previous one.
- 383 - Support for study programs. The GNC is co-funding a study program for
384 Pastor Rene Risch in Germany. Traditionally this was done via the EKD, but
385 due to internal challenges they could not commit to these for 2018 nor 2019.
386 No clear indication has been given on future support either.

387 5.6 **Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)**

388 An important event was the visit by the EKD Council to Southern Africa. They spent
389 two and a half days in Gauteng, were the SACC, the German Ambassador and ELCSA
390 (N-T) was visited. We tried to expose them to as much a representative variety of
391 ELCSA (N-T) as was possible in this short time. One important occasion was an
392 evening with Pastors and Congregational Councillors from the Northern and Central
393 Circuit. Here the delegation could experience first hand the diversity of our Church. The
394 visit ended with a morning meeting with ELCSA (N-T) Church Council.

395 For most members it was their first visit to South Africa. For us it was important that
396 they understand that we are not a German Church, but a Church that also works in
397 German. The tendency of the EKD is to focus on German work only, and we need to be
398 taken seriously in all aspects of our ministry.

399 Rev Klaus Burckhardt retired in 2018, and the new person responsible for Southern
400 Africa is Rev Marc Reusch. A partner consultation is planned from 4-6 November 2019
401 in conjunction with the EKD Synod in Dresden. We hope to establish a good working
402 foundation with Rev Reusch.

403 Currently there are two pastors sent via the EKD: Wilko Hunger in Northrand, and
404 Nicole Otte-Kempf in Pretoria - Johannes congregation. Indications are that such
405 secondments to Southern Africa will not be increased, but rather further reduced in
406 future. Also, different forms of seconding are investigated, since there are challenges,
407 especially in view of taxation and benefits.

408 For us this exchange with Pastors from Germany remains an important and enriching
409 experience.

410 The EKD offers certain training programs for partner churches, and we had participants
411 at some of these. We are grateful for this opportunity.

412 5.7 **Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)**

413 Currently the Moderamen of the DRC and Church Council of UELCSA are working on

414 a Memorandum of Co-operation between us. We decided to do this on UELCSA rather
415 than ELCSA (N-T) level, since the DRC and UELCSA work in the same geographical
416 area. The intention is to agree on procedures regarding exchange of pastors and joint
417 training ventures for clergy.

418 Another matter that concerns the DRC and was widely commented on was the Court
419 Case regarding the employment of gay clergy. General Synod 2015 had agreed to this.
420 Due to immense pressure a special General Synod in 2016 reverted on this decision. As
421 a result a pressure group instituted legal action against the DRC on this matter. The High
422 Court in 2019 declared the 2016 decision unconstitutional, upholding the 2015 decision.
423 The whole matter has not helped the Church in this discussion, but rather hardened the
424 extreme positions. Whereas the 2015 synod dealt with the issue with much compassion
425 and sensitivity, from 2016 onwards it became a battle of a different nature, with less
426 respect and a strong focus on “right and wrong” opinions. Although the 2015 decision
427 is now again the binding one, it no longer is based on careful theological debate in a
428 caring climate, but on a legal position that does not allow any differing views.
429 Partly for this reason our theological study commission recommends that the discussion
430 in ELCSA (N-T) continues rather than forcing a vote on the issue.

431 5.8 South African Council of Churches (SACC)

432 Two aspects dominated the reporting period: The “South Africa we Pray for” initiative
433 was started in reaction to the growing evidence of State Capture, corrupt politics and
434 dysfunctional state, provincial and local government structures. It also deals with the
435 state of education and the economy.

436 Please visit <http://sacc.org.za/about/campaigns/south-africa-we-pray-for/> for detailed
437 information.

438 A direct result of this was the calling of a National Convention to address these issues.
439 ELCSA (N-T) had four representatives at these conventions, participating in the various
440 sub-themes.

441 The challenge of all of these initiatives is to build on what was discussed and decided.
442 For that reason it is important that as many of us as possible read the “South Africa we
443 Pray for” brochure and see what we can implement in our communities and
444 congregations.

445 The other important aspect revolved around the 2019 general elections. The aim was to
446 mobilise the local congregations to provide election observers that would be trained to
447 observe at every polling station, to contribute to free and fair elections. The project,
448 although commendable, was much too big and difficult to pull through. Of the envisaged
449 200 000 observers eventually 7000 were identified and trained and deployed. We thank
450 those members of ELCSA (N-T) who were willing to be part of this process.

451 Many of the regional expressions of the SACC are currently facing severe challenges.
452 The Gauteng Council of Churches is virtually dysfunctional, the Diakonia Council of
453 Churches decided to halt all operations for a year due to financial challenges.

454 It seems a sad reality that many institutions that operate on donor or public funding are
455 in trouble due to a lack of accountability and mismanagement. The dismal state of our
456 state owned enterprises such as ESKOM, SABC and others seems to replicate itself on
457 all levels of society. This highlights the urgency of the “South Africa we Pray for”
458 initiative.

459 **5.9 Church Unity Commission (CUC)**
460 During this reporting period the CUC celebrated 50 years of existence. It started off as
461 an attempt by the Anglican, Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches to
462 find structural unity. In this process these churches came to mutual recognition of their
463 ministries and into altar and pulpit fellowship. Up to now, however, they could not agree
464 on the office of oversight (in short: The role and status of the Bishop in Church
465 Authority). The aim of structural unity has been replaced with that of good co-operation
466 wherever possible. Our Church, currently observer at the CUC, has, together with the
467 other Lutheran Churches been invited to become a full member of the CUC, which does
468 then also require the mutual recognition of each others ordinations, altar and pulpit
469 fellowship. Currently the Dutch Reformed Church has applied for such full membership.
470 An important aspect of the CUC are the “Unity congregations” - congregations run by
471 two, three or four of the CUC member Churches as a combined project, ministered too
472 by a pastor of one of the denomination, but with members retaining their denominational
473 membership. More than 40 congregations of this nature exist by now. This model should
474 be of interest to us, especially for those congregations that can no longer sustain
475 themselves.
476 Another benefit would be that members of our Church, when moving into areas where
477 no Lutheran Churches exist, can join any of the member churches whilst remaining
478 Lutherans.
479

480 **6 ELCSA (N-T) - Church internal matters**

481 Currently ELCSA (N-T) is facing various challenges that are being dealt with by Church
482 Council and need discussion and decision at Synod.

483 **6.1 Name change (Motion 2 of Church Council to Synod)**

484 When the Church was established in 1981 the name chosen was “Evangelical Lutheran
485 Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Transvaal). At that stage all UELCSA Churches had
486 chosen “ELCSA” as part of their name, with Namibia adding the “W” ELCSWA. The
487 brackets then contained a geographical description (Transvaal, Cape, or in the case of
488 ELCSA the diocesan location) or origin (Hermannsburg). At that stage all Lutheran
489 Churches were in discussion to unite into one organisation, and the common “ELCSA”
490 was also foreseeing this reality.

491 In 1992 the Unity talks came to a stand still.

492 In 1994 the Provinces were re-arranged. Transvaal ceased to exist, Natal was re-named
493 KwaZulu-Natal. At that stage a new name for ELCSA (N-T) was investigated and
494 various proposals made. Eventually it was decided to change (Natal-Transvaal) to (N-T)
495 only - the abbreviation now was the full name. This worked fairly well. Many referred
496 to us as NT. However, this change was not without problems.

- 497 - Overseas partners continue to refer to us as (Natal-Transvaal)
- 498 - Countless times one has to explain why (N-T) is not an abbreviation, and how
499 this name came about.
- 500 - Many of our members refer to us as ELCSA, not realising that ELCSA is a
501 different Church.
- 502 - With ELCSA coming into it’s current financial crisis, including phones not

503 working, a large portion of phone calls to our office are from debtors demanding
504 payments. This problem is made worse as the offices are in the same location.
505 - Both ELCSA (Cape Church) and UELCSA had significant funds taken from
506 their accounts by the South African Receiver of Revenue (SARS), assuming that
507 they were ELCSA accounts. The process to recover those monies from SARS is
508 cumbersome and long-winded.
509 - Banks regularly confuse us with ELCSA and transactions are processed to the
510 wrong accounts.
511 - One inheritance was paid to us, which was intended for ELCSA. We could
512 follow up and establish that it was incorrect, and reroute the monies to ELCSA.
513 We do, however, not know whether inheritances that were intended for ELCSA
514 (N-T) have been paid to ELCSA, due to wills naming ELCSA in stead of
515 ELCSA (N-T).

516 - Despite all our efforts time and again bills, legal documents, contracts name us
517 as ELCSA in stead of ELCSA(N-T), resulting in much additional work and
518 effort to correct the mistake.
519 - Municipalities end up sending their overdue demands to us - by mail and email,
520 and with phone calls, since we are listed next to each other in most directories.
521 - We had to explain to the sheriff of the court that our furniture at head office
522 could not be attached, since we are a different legal entity.

523 All of these issues resulted in the motion of Church Council to synod to change the
524 name. (The motion has been sent out with batch 1). In our research we steered away
525 from any suggestion where the abbreviation starts with ELCSA, since that would not
526 resolve any of the issues. If we want to retain the reference to Lutheran (doctrinal),
527 Evangelical (based on the gospel of Jesus Christ) and South Africa (location forms part
528 of the name of almost all Lutheran Churches in the LWF), the scope for meaningful
529 creativity is limited.

530 The suggestions forwarded to Synod admittedly are not ideal:

531 - Region East and North, Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa” (RENELCSA)

532 - North East Lutheran Evangelical Church in South Africa (NELECSA)

533 Since the start of our investigation a new Church was also established by a group that
534 resigned from ELCSA. They are registered as Liberating ELCSA (LELCSA)

535

536 We do hope that Synod will come to a good conclusion in this regard.

537 6.2 Relocating ELCSA (N-T) Office. (Motion 3 of Church Council to Synod)

538 Parallel to the closing of LTI forced by the financial situation of ELCSA, our office at
539 the Lutheran Centre Bonaero Park also faces challenges because of this. At one stage
540 power was cut due to rates and taxes not having been paid by the owner, ELCSA.
541 ELCSA leased the conference part of the centre to “Outlook Safari”, and they seem to
542 take good care of that part of the infrastructure. Maintenance and upkeep at the office
543 buildings however is kept to a minimum.

544 Our rent was below market rates, which always was a strong financial argument not to
545 move. However, ELCSA had to increase the rent significantly, and presumably will
546 continue to do so to bring it in line with market prices.

547 As a result, ELCSA (N-T) Church Council started to investigate alternatives, should we

548 find ourselves without offices at short notice. Although renting is an option for a short
549 term, it will always depend on the landlord - lessee relationship. Owning an office
550 building on an own piece of land is quite expensive, due to rates and taxes. We thus
551 investigated entering into an agreement with one of our congregations to establish our
552 head office on their premises.

553 The following guided us in the deliberations: Proximity to the Airport, Ease of access
554 from national road network, Availability of venues for Church Council meetings,
555 availability of schools and permanent accommodation in the vicinity for future
556 employees at head office, healthy surroundings.

557 Two congregations came on the short list: Kempton Park and Johannes Congregation in
558 Pretoria. Both congregations in principle agreed to host the head office.

559 Finally Church Council decided on Johannes congregation as preferred option.

560 - The building can be added to existing buildings within the secure property of
561 the congregation, resulting in substantially lower building and ongoing
562 maintenance costs. An agreement to share costs (municipal and other) would
563 regulate and reduce cost.

564 - There are many housing options in a healthy, affordable and secure
565 environment for future employees.

566 - A variety of good schools in the vicinity, including various tertiary institutions.

567 - Quick access to the N4, N1 and R 21 Highways.

568 - A well developed infrastructure with garden, parking etc, creating a welcoming
569 atmosphere.

570 On the negative side are that the trip to the airport takes 30 minutes longer than from
571 Kempton Park, and that accommodation has to be in Bed&Breakfasts close by, whereas
572 at Kempton Park we can currently still make use of the Outlook Lodge OR Tambo.
573

574 A decisive aspect that made us opt for Johannes congregation is that there is uncertainty
575 regarding the long term planning of Ekurhuleni Council regarding the development of
576 the region as an Aerotropolis. Part of those plans include the extension of the OR Tambo
577 Airport, which would include the current offices and surrounds.

578 6.3 **Investigating new models for funding pastoral posts and new models of ministry.**

579 As indicated above, more and more congregations struggle to raise enough funds to
580 maintain a pastor's post. At the same time more and more pastors, especially the
581 younger ones, struggle to fulfill all their financial commitments with regards to
582 schooling and education of their children. This means that, whilst salaries should be
583 increased in view of the pastors' challenges, congregants face similar challenges and
584 contribute less. For that reason a task team under the leadership of Dean Theo Jaeckel
585 has been commissioned to investigate new or different models.

586 Meanwhile ELCSA (N-T) has already taken different approaches within our current
587 structures, which include half posts and shared posts, and the current attempt to deal
588 with the WRLCC situation, mentioned above. Also the lay led congregations mentioned
589 above are such a possibility.

591 6.4 **Financial Challenges of congregations and how to deal with them**

592 This is directly linked to the previous point. In the past many congregations experienced

593 periods of insufficient funding and could overcome these by utilising reserves and
594 building them up afterwards. Others received temporal assistance from the Church and
595 recovered again. However indications are that there are a few congregations that will not
596 be coping for the foreseeable future. These could, until recently, also apply for funding
597 from the solidarity fund. As the Finance report shows, the income into the solidarity
598 fund has not been as anticipated, thus closing this avenue. The major support from the
599 solidarity fund is the reduction given to each and every congregation on a portion of
600 Church running costs. Should we do away with that, it would increase the monthly
601 contribution of all congregations, resulting in more not being able to meet these.
602 For this reason congregations are encouraged to increase their contribution to the
603 solidarity fund as much as they can, and encourage members to donate into that fund, so
604 that this mutual support can continue to be granted.

605 6.5 **Workshops with congregational councils**

606 When discussing these developments in ELCSA (N-T), Church Council realised that
607 some of these problems occur when congregational leadership is not fully aware of their
608 responsibilities and accountabilities. Bishop Müller has subsequently written a letter to
609 all pastors and congregational councils, offering to do workshops with them. This offer
610 has been well received so far.

611 Perhaps the biggest eye-opener is the workshop on understanding the governance
612 structures of ELCSA (N-T). Although it was aimed at those joining our Church from
613 elsewhere, it also became clear that even people born into our Church do not understand
614 many of its workings.

615 Another important topic is that of the specific calling of a congregation.

616 Treasurer Vernon Filter and Bishop Müller together also conduct a workshop on
617 finances in the congregation.

618 For a full list of courses see <http://www.elcsant.org.za/bishops-corner.html>

619 May Synod 2019 help us to **Go- with Purpose**, to re-discover and re-commit to our calling as
620 one of many Churches in South Africa

621 ***ELCSA (N-T) Church Council, Bonaero Park, 31 July 2019***

622 *Mr Henning Springer (President); Bishop Horst Müller, Dean Theo Jaeckel (Deputy to the bishop),*

623 *Mr Vernon Filter (Treasurer), Pastor Petra Röhrs (Ordained member),*

624 *Mr Eckart Krüger (Northern Circuit), Ms Ann Mokhine (Central Circuit),*

625 *Dr Hans Schütte (Eastern Circuit), Ms Annette Pfeifer (Southern Circuit)*

626 ***From Ecclesiastical Council: Dean Remo Köhne, Dean Hugo Filter, Dean Dirk Köstlin***