



Bishop's Post *April May 2022*

Bible for the road ...

During *Easter* the daily Bible reading is from John. In our services we will read Mark and Luke. If you listen carefully, you will notice differences. The Evangelists each highlighted what they regarded important and wanted their audience to hear.

In *May* we read, amongst others, the letter of Paul to the Galatians. It is good to remind ourselves that the letters were not written as a contribution to the New Testament. No New Testament existed at that stage. The gospels were in the process of being compiled. Luke 1,1-4 describes how Luke was researching and sorting material at this stage. The oldest Christian congregations were not even 20 years old. There were no Church constitutions, codes, or guidelines for Christian living.

Most of the letters were written in response to questions from the young congregations, or to offer direction as to what it means to be a Christian.

Galatians was written to non-Jewish Christians (in modern day Ankara, Turkey). Jewish Christians were visiting the young congregation, telling the people that they had to adopt Jewish custom and law, now that they were followers of Christ. Since Jesus was the Jewish messiah, they had to effectively become Jews too.

In Acts 15 and Galatians 2 we read about the intense debate, even fighting, amongst the apostles on this matter. They had to ask: What does it mean that Christ is Saviour of all? What is expected of non-Jews that become Christians? Which rules and regulations apply, and which are superseded by Christ's death and resurrection?

Although we no longer face these particular issues, the New Testament letters provide us with extremely important fundamental discussions and arguments that help us dealing with our modern challenges. That is why I am not only grateful for the New Testament as we have it today, but also urge Christians to read and know it.

One example: All too often I encounter people complaining about "new Christians" that are not adopting old traditions and liturgies and are therefore "diluting the Christian Faith". Here Galatians 2, 15-21 can help us, especially


where Paul writes: “We know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.”

Perhaps the most important fundamental guideline in dealing with modern challenges is in Gal 2,20: “**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.**” How can my actions best reflect Christ?

As I am writing this message the global Corona Crisis is being overshadowed by Putin’s war against Ukraine. I pray that those who work for peace will be strengthened, and those who want war and commit crimes will be frustrated and brought to book. This does not only apply to Ukraine and Russia, but also to all the other areas in the world where wars are raging. I pray that Christians caught up in these will be strengthened and guided by Christ’s Spirit to be part of peaceful solutions.

In times like these being well rooted in New Testament teachings can end wars when Christians are called to repent and refrain from injustice and strengthened to be followers of Christ.

May Christ live in and through us!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hart Müller". The script is cursive and somewhat informal.

News from NELCSA

Pastor Jessica Schmidt was ordained on 20 March in Wartburg. Although she does not have a permanent position at the moment, we pray that she will be a blessing to many as she assists here and there.

The **General Pastors’ Convention** takes place from 9 to 13 May in Benoni. The theme is: “Living Christ’s Unity as a Diverse Church”. The aim is for our pastors to be equipped to deal with the diversity in their congregations in a constructive way, so that our church can be a blessing to South Africa.

The **NELCSA Brass Festival** is planned for 22 May in Wartburg. May it be a wonderful celebration after two years of lockdown!