



Bishop's Post

August September 2022

Bible for the road ...

Rehoboam did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord. (2 Chronicles 12,14) Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He removed the foreign altars... (2 Chronicles 14,2)

What to do with aspects of history that you don't like? Eradicate them. Ignore them. "Write them away" by re-writing history.

South Africa is experiencing this "dealing with history" through the removal of monuments, and renaming of cities, towns, streets amongst others. The German Third Reich tried to remove everything Jewish from German history, culture and architecture. The Soviet Union brought in Marx, Stalin and Lenin to replace older names, and currently many now independent states are busy removing these again.

Personally, I am saddened by attempts to eradicate signs of past rulers. Rather they can serve as reminders of how things can go wrong. How can we learn from history, if we ignore it?

During August and September, the daily Bible readings take us through 1&2 Chronicles. These were written around 400 BC, long after the return of the Jews from Exile. The 10 northern tribes had long ceased to exist, and are ignored in this account. Also, it does not mention the dark sides of David, but focusses on his and Samuel's role in establishing the religious practises and temple. The writer has a clear aim: He wants the Jews to do away with idolatry, be loyal to the temple cult and devout worshippers of the God of Israel.

Can one condone such selective writing of history? Well, actually all historiography is selective. The problem is when it claims to be totally objective and correct. For this reason, Chronicles did not replace the older writings of Samuel and Kings. These were compiled during the exile to reflect on why Israel collapsed and was almost eradicated. It therefore also highlights the transgressions of all kings, including David and Solomon. Chronicles now wants to show a way forward.

When reflecting on the history of our church or congregation, and even our own history, we too will be selective. Depending on our intentions we will focus on good or bad, achievements or failures. We will highlight some aspects and ignore others. It is important that we are aware of our intentions.

Looking at the past really only becomes meaningful when we want to use the past to build the future, learn from the past to improve on the way forward. I am sure that Rehoboam was not only bad, and Asa not only good. The author of Chronicles focusses on the leadership they gave regarding faith matters and religious practise.

Somewhere in the future people will look back at us and our times, and will write about what we did or did not do. They will reflect on the impact that our actions have on their lives. Some will be good; others will be condemned. I pray that, through the grace of our Lord, and by us being willing to be guided by the Holy Spirit, the summary will be that what we did “was good and right in the eyes of the Lord”.

Host Müller

News from NELCSA

“ALIVE” is the theme that guides the NELCSA Synod from 14 to 16 October in the North Rand congregation. On 15 October the new bishop will be elected. During the closing service of synod on 16 October the bishop and others who have been elected into office will be inducted. Please pray for God’s guidance for synod and the elections, and that those elected will be strengthened for their serving. Parts of synod and the closing service will be live broadcasted.

Pastor Em. Helmut Dedekind passed away on 6 June 2022. After his ordination in 1977 he served as pastor in New Hannover, St Pauls Durban and then Kempton Park. This was followed by an exchange programme, where he served in Eisenach, Germany. After this he concluded his service as pastor in the North Rand Congregation. Helmut also served in various church-wide capacities: Youth Pastor, Dean of the Central Circuit and Spiritual Leader of the Brass Band Association. After retirement he and his wife Christa lived in Eisenach, where he then passed away at the age of 78. We are thankful for his service in the Church of Christ. May the Lord comfort his wife and family.

On 27 June 2022 **Prof. Dr. Klaus Nürnberger** passed away in Pretoria, aged 89. As teacher of theology, he taught generations of Lutheran Theologians in South Africa and beyond. He also played a major role in the development of theological training in Southern Africa. Together with his wife Maxi they continuously tried to build bridges between churches, and for this had to endure criticism from all sides. Despite this criticism they continued to interact with all sides. We thank the Lord for this life of serving!

On 16 July **Manfred Schütte** passed away at the age of 88. From 1993 to 1999 he served as treasurer of ELCSA (N-T). We thank the Lord for this and other tasks that he fulfilled within church and congregation. May the Lord comfort his wife Rona and the whole family.