



Bishop's Post

August September 2021

NELCSA

**The NELCSA Logo part IV
“Past-Present-Future”**

“You know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.” - Peter said this at the Apostle’s council, after much discussion and quarrelling. (Acts 15,7)

Names of cities and towns are changed, monuments of the Colonial and Apartheid times removed. Similar things have been happening many times over and in many countries during history. I myself grew up with selective historiography. We were taught about Jan van Riebeeck, the founding father of South Africa, the Groot Trek, Gold and Diamond rush, Boer wars and 20th century history. The ANC and Mandela did not feature at all - as if they did not exist.

Selective historiography is quite popular. If you want to move forward, however, you should try to understand the past as much as possible, rather than ignoring it!

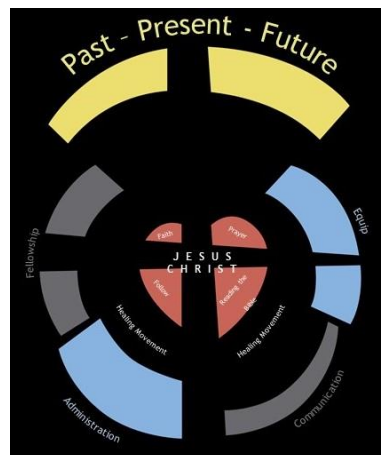
When reading in the book of Acts I was struck by how often the cited sermons include lengthy historical passages, in order to show the listeners how Jesus fits into the picture of history. Also, Paul spends much time to understand the background of the strangers he meets, in order to then share the message of Christ with them.

Acts 15 gives a short summary of the very first synod of the church. The main agenda point was the importance of Jewish rituals and customs for non-Jewish Christians. The issue was hotly debated, until Peter finally gets up and recalls his encounter with Cornelius (Acts 10). Based on this event that had happened a few decades earlier, the synod understands what is happening now, and can make decisions that open the way for the proclamation of the gospel in foreign cultures. It concludes that Christ alone brings salvation, without the need of circumcision or other customs.

The top part of our NELCSA Logo stands for “Past, Present, Future”.

Unlock the PAST by knowing it and being aware of where you come from.

It is important that we understand where our NELCSA comes from. This includes positive as well as negative developments, good as well as problematic decisions.



Congregational leadership should also know and understand the history of their own congregation. This will help you to understand what makes it unique, why certain things are done in certain ways, and where some current problems had their origin. It will also help you, as in Acts 15, to decide which customs are no longer relevant. Understanding the past, helps us to interpret the PRESENT. And when knowing your past in a non-selective way, and being aware of your present, you are in a good position to actively prepare for the FUTURE.

The fact that the Apostles tried to understand the people in their history and context contributed significantly to the rapid spread of the early church.

For us to play an important role in our challenging times, it is just as important to know our history, interpret the present so that we can proclaim Christ as the Lord who guides us into the future.

Horst Müller

News from NELCSA

Pastor Hugo Filter retired on 31 July. After his Ordination on 1 January 1984, he served as chaplain before commencing his first pastor's post in Germiston (1986-94). From there he moved to Wartburg (till 2003) and Hakboslaagte/Potchefstroom (till 2009) before becoming pastor in Braunschweig in 2010. He so far is the only pastor who served in all four circuits of NELCSA. He also served in the Mission Committee and as Dean of the Eastern Circuit.

Despite retiring, he will help out in the Trinity Zululand congregation for a year as of September 2021.

We are grateful for the 36 years that Hugo could work full-time in our church, and also thank his wife Lynette and their now adult children for their support and involvement over the years. May the (reduced) service as retiree be a blessing for the couple and the Trinity congregation.

The pastor's post in **Braunschweig** is now vacant. May the Lord guide and strengthen the congregation in this time.

The service of **Pastor Dieter Trümpelmann** in NELCSA and St Peters by the Lake ends on the 31st of July 2021, by mutual agreement. May the Lord guide the family on the way forward.

With that the **St Peters by the Lake** congregation becomes vacant. Here too we pray that the Lord will guide the congregation to move forward.

Pastor Dr. Gertrud Tönsing has accepted a call to a 50% post by the **St Peters Pretoria** congregation. This is in addition to the full post held by Pastor Dr. Detlev Tönsing. May the Lord bless the service of the Tönsings.

The **NELCSA Synod** has been postponed by a year due to the Covid-uncertainties. However, a Zoom session of Synod will be held on 9 October 2021 to adopt the budget. In order to prepare for this, two Zoom preparation sessions will be held on 14 and 28 August. Synod delegates, pastors, councils, especially treasurers, are requested to attend one of these. Interested members of NELCSA can listen in as well. The budget will be explained, and suggestions can be made, so that they then can be incorporated for the final adoption on 9 October.

We rejoice with the **Kroondal Congregation** which is celebrating 125 years of existence, and hope that a proper celebration will be possible soon.