



Bishop's Post

June July 2021

NELCSA

The NELCSA Logo part III "Fellowship"

**I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."
Psalm 122,1**

In the series on explaining the logo, mission and purpose of NELCSA, today I focus on Fellowship, linking it to the left side of the Logo.

Lockdown has forced us to re-think and discover new ways of "doing" church. What is church about? What is congregation about?

For many people it is linked to Sundays, and more specifically to the church service on a Sunday. It might even be

narrowed down to the sermon in the service. During lockdown many people chose only to view the sermons, not the whole services that were sent out.

If good sermons define what church is about, then we can very well survive by continuing on this online platform only.

But church and congregation are about much more.

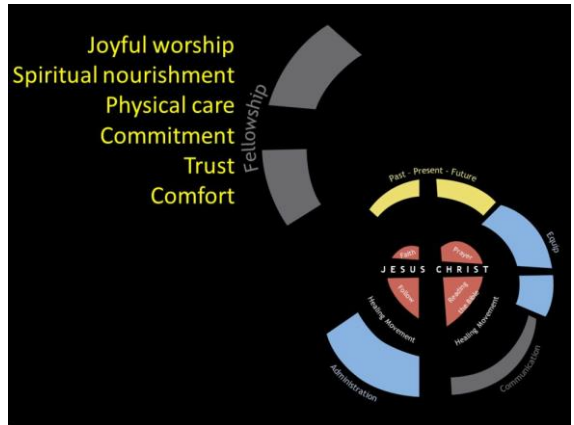
Watching an excellent service online is not the same as singing along, praying with others - friends and strangers - at a real service.

Covid-19 made us very much aware of what happens when breathing problems starve the body from oxygen. Just as proper breathing in and out is essential for life, faith thrives on breathing in: what nourishment and support do I get, and breathing out: how can I be meaningfully involved and connected. If I only receive, my faith becomes stale. If I only give, I burn out.

Fellowship in the congregation is this breathing in and out! I divide the fellowship into three spheres:

Firstly, between bells and postlude. The way we celebrate our services can build fellowship. By involving young and old in readings, prayers, announcements, music, and sometimes even in the sermon, the service no longer is a performance to be watched, but an event of which I become part - joyful celebration!

Secondly, before and after service. This is more important than we can ever imagine. This is where newcomers are welcomed, where I can hear and share how



things are going, where people develop a sense of belonging. This part suffered most during lockdown, and we must focus on re-gaining it whilst observing the health guidelines.

Thirdly, between Sundays. Most congregations have a variety of meetings during the week - seniors, youth, parents, musicians - just to mention a few. The fellowship also happens when congregants visit another, give care when needed, and communicate by phone or virtual platforms. This fellowship sends the message: I am not alone on the journey through life! Brothers and sisters are journeying with me!

This aspect too suffered under lockdown, and we need to find creative ways to re-establish this fresh breath of fellowship!

May we, like the Psalmist, again rejoice as doors open to join others in and around the “House of the Lord”.

Hart Müller

News from NELCSA

1. **Pastor Rene Risch** was inducted on 9 May 2021 in a shared post of 25% Hermannsburg Congregation, 25% Youth Pastor KZN and 50% School Pastor HMB. This is till December 2023, by which time all parties will indicate whether this shared post should continue. We pray that the Lord will bless this combined work and the Risch family. We thank **Pastor Udo Lütge** for the many years of serving as KZN youth pastor and are grateful for the blessings that could flow through him!

2. On Easter Sunday 2021, the **Moorleigh Congregation** had its closing service. We gratefully look back at almost 160 years of work started by the Hermannsburg mission. When Moorleigh was the head office of the mission in South Africa, new missionaries would go there to learn the local language before being ordained and sent out.

It hosted synods, conferences, church festivals, and its school and hostel were home to many children.

Closing such a congregation is a sad occasion. We pray for comfort for those who are mourning the ending of this once strong and leading congregation.

We pray for God’s blessing on the last members now moving to new spiritual homes. We pray for Winterton, that will become the new home to most.

We also pray for the Zulu congregation. Through them the work that started in 1863 is continuing. It too is going through challenging times. May it however flourish and grow and continue to be a blessing in the surrounding community.

3. Thank you to all who helped prepare the **Virtual Choir Festival**. In case you missed it, you can still catch up by visiting www.NELCSA.net, where all the links are listed.

We also bode farewell to Walter Johannes, who's term as leader of the association has come to an end. Thank you, Walter, for all the tremendous work that you did! May you continue to be a blessing at your new home!

4. **Winter Series Services 2021**

After positive feedback, Bishop Müller will again plan a Winter Series Services, based on the themes of the Sundays 11-25 July 2021 (6-8 after Trinity).

It would be wonderful if members of your congregation are willing to “participate” through pre-recordings with music, readings or prayers. Also, we would love to include singing from congregations. If you wish to provide such recordings, please write to hmuller@nelcsa.net, subject: Winter series participation.