



Bishop's Post

October November 2021

NELCSA

The NELCSA Logo part V “Equipping”

October would have seen us holding synod and electing my successor as bishop. Covid concerns led Church Council to postpone Synod to next year. Covid so far had a massive impact on congregation activities and services as well. Will Church survive this crisis?

This is not the first time a question like this is being asked.

Paul, after founding the Christian congregation in Thessalonica had to flee overnight. He was extremely worried about the viability of the congregation. When various attempts to go back failed, he sent his colleague Timothy to see whether anything was left of this ministry. He writes about his concerns: **“For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith; I was afraid that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labour had been in vain.”** (1 Thess 3,5). The feedback that Timothy gave when returning a few months later was very encouraging. God was building his Church, despite all the challenges!

These challenges - especially travel restrictions and untrained local Christian leaders, forced Paul to take a new approach, a new form of ministry, a virtual ministry making use of the technology of that time - not internet, but by letters. Letter writing was not common. Parchment tough enough to withstand rough travel conditions, and big enough to contain longer messages was expensive. But it seemed to be a good alternative, since Paul could not visit in person. And so, the first known letter of Paul came to be written. 1 Thessalonians is the oldest book in the New Testament, followed by many more. These letters became the training material for the young Church and its leadership. No pastors existed as yet!

Together with the teachings of Jesus, in the process of being collected and compiled into our gospels, they would form the foundation of Christian doctrine and teaching.



The crisis that Paul feared might kill a young Church turned out to produce a ministry that since then capacitated the Church more than any other!

One of the NELCSA priorities is to train and equip our total membership.

The survival and growth of a congregation does not depend on it having a pastor, but on the membership being able to serve each other and Christ according to their talents and gifts. Just as Paul, we have to learn that the Holy Spirit is building Church even in the absence of apostles or pastors. Just as Paul, we have to find ways of equipping our members to be mature Christians, standing their ground in challenging times.

Corona is challenging - but it also forces us to find new and good ways of being Church. May we have the courage to follow, where the Holy Spirit is leading!

Hart Müller

News from the Church.

1. We thank retired pastors who are helping out in vacant congregations:

Hugo Filter in **Trinity Zululand**, **Werner Harms** in **Braunschweig** and **Charles Paine** in **East Rand Lutheran Church** /Germiston. Furthermore, **Martha Weich** (Cape Church) is assisting in **St Peters by the Lake**.

2. **Pastor Ron Küsel** has accepted the call from the German Seafarers Mission into a full post for the GSM Durban, as from 1 January 2022. The **Lutheran Congregation Dolphin Coast** is in the process of exploring a different form of ministry to build the young congregation, that does not depend on a full-time pastor being present. This is a pioneering spirit that will be a blessing for our Church at large! May the Holy Spirit guide them, as he did in the early Church (Thessalonica mentioned above!).

3. The financial session of **NELCSA Synod 2021** will be done virtually on Saturday, 9 October, in order to adopt the budget. The rest of the Synod will happen in 2022.

4. Our **Vryheid** congregation is celebrating its centenary on 7 November 2021. We are grateful with them for the ministry that has happened from there and pray that it will continue to be a blessing in these changing times.

5. **eQuip 2022** is planned for 2-6 January 2022 in Hermannsburg, KZN. The theme **“Touched”** grew from our experience of two years of isolation and physical distancing. What role does touch play in our lives and also in our relationship to our Lord? More information will be made available soon on www.nelcsa.net