

Bishops' Post

I greet you with words from the gospel of Luke, chapter 2, the verse 10 and 11:

10 And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

Do not be afraid!

We live in times that are changing, seemingly for the worse. Wars are being waged. People in great numbers are having to flee from their homes to escape the fighting and are becoming refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that, by the middle of 2023, for the first time in recorded history, the number of people forcibly displaced is now over 110 million, with over 36.4 million refugees. People in many places have had to send their sons and daughters off to fight battles. Innocent people in towns and at functions have been attacked by terrorists and are being threatened with even more such attacks. Innocent citizens on both sides of conflicts, wishing to live their normal day to day lives are caught up in wars they did not choose but have unwillingly been made part of.

Do not be afraid!

Economically times are hard and are even getting worse for many families in our country and in our church. Unemployment is on the rise as are our living costs. Our economy is in bad shape. Loadshedding is part of our daily reality. Greed, crime, dishonesty, and corruption are running rampant.

Do not be afraid! Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."

This is an unchanging message in changing times. It is a message of hope in a troubled world that is largely hopeless. At Christmas, we remember that Jesus was born in poverty, in a stable among the poorest people. God became one of us. He lived among us, knows us, and loves us. He came to bring us the message of the love of God and the hope that we find only in Him.

The message of Christmas. God is with us! He understands us. We can be saved, we can be healed, we can overcome obstacles, we can forgive, we can be forgiven, we can minister we can be confident. We have hope!

I close with a quote from Hamilton Wright Mabie: "Blessed is the season that engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love."

I wish you a blessed Christmas filled with hope and love.

News from NELCSA

- The yearly eQuip camp of the NELCSA with the topic "eQuip in LOVE- Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Corinthians 16,14) will be taking place from the 2nd to the 6th of January 2024. Invitations have been sent to all congregations.
- We thank the congregation Augsburg for their hosting of church synod in October. Thank you for your hospitality and good organization.
- We congratulate our theology student PJ Hanekom who was elected to the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) council to represent the Youth at the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA), a communion of 15 member churches operating in 10 countries throughout Southern Africa. We also congratulate our theology students, Tristan Krüger and Rutendo Gora are representing NELCSA at the LWF as Youth Reformers.
- We are all aware of the shortage of pastors that we are presently experiencing as NELCSA. A group of theology, students, that include some of our students studying at Stellenbosch, have written a book. 'Journeys from the Crossroads: Stories on living, studying and doing theology.' The intention of this book is to inspire theology students on their journey. Anyone who wishes to read this encouraging book can do so on the internet at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/resources/publication-journeys-crossroads>.

Theodor Jäckel (Bishop)

