

Bishops' Post August / September 2023

"Jesus said: I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Hope – Live it!

This will be the topic of our upcoming church synod in October. Hope has also been the topic of the last two bishop's posts.

Where there is hope it is life changing. Hope is the knowledge that God is there and is in charge. We are not alone. God will answer. He will show us a way forward.

In our country and world there are so many people who have lost hope. There seem to be so many hurts, problems, sicknesses, troubles, financial woes, family problems, world issues, financial and political concerns. It often seems the world has no hope. Economists, scientists, and politicians promise answers, but the hopelessness continues.

In the gospel of John Jesus speaks to his disciples shortly before his crucifixion and death. He speaks of many things, one of them is hope and peace. He knows of the difficulties that await them and wants to give them the strength to overcome these difficulties. He wants to give them and us hope.

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The word of God does not promise us a wonderful, peaceful life of prosperity, health, and happiness. No one wants to endure struggles or troubles in life or to be in painful circumstances, but unfortunately, they are a part of life. God's word does not deny this.

Jesus knows of our pain and troubles. He knows of those times when we have no answers and are burdened by fear and anxiety. He knows of those things that we discuss with one another at our gatherings and of those things that we keep only unto ourselves and want to share with nobody else. We believe in a personal God, who walked this earth. A God who knows our joys and successes, but also our fears and problems.

God knows our life – In this world you will have joy and peace, but you will also have times of fear and hopelessness.

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Jesus has overcome all that is against what He lived and taught, through his death and resurrection. The word "overcome" comes from a Greek word which can be translated *to overcome* but is also the word for *victory*. It is however not a single victory but *a continuous, abiding victory* both now and in the future. Jesus says: "*I have overcome the world; I am overcoming the world; and I will always be overcoming the world.*" This is what give us as Christians the hope that we live with and that cannot be taken from us.

News from NELCSA

- It is with regret that we take leave of pastors Rolf and Jessica Schmidt who have relocated to America and will be serving in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Rolf served in the United Evangelical Lutheran Congregation and Jessica in the Lutheran Congregation Dolphin Coast. We will miss them and their input but wish them God's blessing and everything of the best for the new phase of their lives.
- The Church Unity Commission endeavours to strengthen relationships and unity among member churches and observer churches through continued discussions in doctrinal reconciliation and seeking cooperation in theological training and formation. It is also active in development of common liturgical resources, development of centres of hope and promoting further co-operation in ministry and mission at local level. This includes the development of models of local ecumenism and united congregations. There has been growth in membership in the few past years. Since foundation in 1958 by the 4 founding churches, the CUC added as a member church the NGK-SA in 2019 and now in 2023 NELCSA has received to full membership. This brings the total of member churches to 6 and 4 observer members. We are grateful to be part of this ecumenical movement. It can also be an aid especially for those congregations that can no longer sustain themselves.

Theo Jäckel

