

Bishops Post August/September 2024



And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)

God has been a sending God from the very beginning. He has always chosen people and called them to a task. God wants to bring His heart's desire to people and show them: "I love you and I want to have a relationship with you!" For this reason, God sent Jesus, His own Son. Jesus came to overcome the sin that stood between people and God through His death and resurrection. He calls people to follow Him and to make this news known. As a Christian, I am on a journey with Jesus and invite others to join me. Those who have the best news in the world to tell should not keep it to themselves.

What I do practically bears witness to what is in my heart. Jesus was not only concerned with the spiritual well-being of people but also with the everyday needs of their lives. Faith has an impact on my practical actions. Jesus says in Matthew 5:16, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*" (ESV) My motivation and what is in my heart are revealed through practical actions in everyday life. If what I say matches my actions, I become credible.

In a friendship, you meet at eye level. The word of one person is not worth more than the word of another. This also applies to sharing the good news I believe in with others. If I inwardly place myself above the other person because I think I have all the knowledge, I can ruin a lot. It is also extremely important to distinguish between the message of faith and our own culture, our character, our traditions, and even our pre-conceived notions. As faith and culture are very closely interwoven, this is a major challenge.

God has been a sending God from the very beginning. He has always chosen people and called them. He calls me and you to invite others to follow Him and to accompany them on this journey.

News from NELCSA

We thank God for the peaceful elections and the freedom we exercise, as well as the many blessings of democracy we enjoy in South Africa. We pray for all our duly elected leaders and ask God to guide them. We ask God to bless the government, heal differences, and unite us as a country. May the newly elected government serve all people, especially those who are most vulnerable among us.

We bid a heartfelt farewell to Pastor Nicole Otte Kempf, her husband Karsten, and their children as they leave for Germany this August. We are deeply grateful for Nicole's dedicated service, the sharing of her gifts, and her unwavering proclamation of the gospel. As we express our gratitude for her contributions, we are pleased to announce that Pastor Kornelia Schauf will be joining us to serve the Johannesgemeinde. She will be accompanied by her husband, Kees, and we look forward to welcoming them.

The centenary celebration of the Brass Band Association (Posaunenverband) of NELCSA will take place from August 9th to 11th in Hermansburg. We thank God for the proclamation of the gospel through music and for the dedication of all leaders and members. May God continue to bless this important ministry.

Understanding our origins as NELCSA helps us gain deeper insight into ourselves and connects us with the world around us. This knowledge provides a sense of place and belonging and guides our actions both today and into the future.

Historically, NELCSA has two primary roots: German immigration to Southern Africa and European missionary efforts in the 19th century. We thank God for the development since then that has shaped our church into the vibrant, multicultural, and multiracial community it is today.

Two missionary societies were particularly influential in the church's development: the Berlin Missionary Society and the Hermannsburg Mission Society.

The Berlin Missionary Society began its work 200 years ago in 1834, starting in the Cape in South Africa and later expanding to New Germany in Kwazulu-Natal. The society supported work in South Africa, China, and East Africa, and it continues to exist today as the Berliner Missionswerk. A century ago, in 1924, missionaries and descendants of the Berlin Missionary Society established the Bund der Nachkommen Berliner Missionare (Association of Descendants of Berlin Missionaries). On July 6th, a group of these descendants met in the Johannesgemeinde in Pretoria for a service of thanksgiving and to close the association, marking 100 years of continued contact among the descendants.

The Hermannsburg Mission was founded as the Hermannsburg Mission Centre (Missionsanstalt Hermannsburg) in 1849 in Hermannsburg, near Celle, North Germany, by Louis Harms. This year marks its 175th anniversary. In 1854, missionaries and others established the mission station of Hermannsburg in KwaZulu-Natal. The Hermannsburg Mission also extended its work to Australia (1866), North America (1866), New Zealand (1875), Iran (1880), Brazil (1898), and Ethiopia (1927), though not all areas could continue to be supported in the long run. Today, the Hermannsburg Mission is known as "The Evangelical Lutheran Mission of Lower Saxony" or Ev. Luth. Missionswerk in Niedersachsen (ELM).

From August 29th to September 6th, 2024, the ELM will hold its Partner Consultation in Johannesburg, South Africa. Representatives from around the world will attend this meeting, where the society will also celebrate its 175th anniversary. Both ELCSA and NELCSA will participate, with some congregations of our church hosting delegates for a day, allowing them to experience our church as it is today. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all those hosting delegates.

Theo Jäckel