



Kirchenchorverband Church Choir Association der NELCSA of the NELCSA

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Report of the NELCSA Church Choir Association to Synod 2023

1. Introduction

Although this report only covers the one year that has passed since the last Synod meeting in 2022, much has happened in the Choir ministry of our Church in that time. Since the last report was written, we have been able to celebrate both Circuit and Church Choir Festivals again and have been able to address many of our concerns regarding leadership in our Association.

2. Choir Festivals in 2022 and 2023

The first choir festivals that were held again post-Covid, were the following Circuit Choir Festivals in 2022:

- Central Region: 14 August 2022 in Piet Retief
- Southern Region: 11 September in Hayfields
- Northern Region: 18 September in Germiston

Despite the challenges that we have faced in the last few years – and perhaps because of them – the Circuit Choir Festivals brought much joy to choristers and listeners. On the whole, these festivals were quite well supported, with especially the Choir Festival of the Southern Circuit showing significant growth – the approach of inviting the Hermannsburg School Choir and compiling a collaborative programme with them was a resounding success and this approach will continue and be expanded on into the future (see 4. *Challenges and Responses* below).

The NELCSA Choir Festival in 2023 was celebrated on the Sunday Jubilate on 30 April 2023 in the *Johannesgemeinde*, Pretoria. The Association leadership and the host congregation put in a big effort that resulted in a successful festival. Choristers and Congregation were greatly encouraged by God's Word, the fellowship and the wonderful music. We were very grateful for the overwhelming positive feedback from this first Church Choir Festival in four years and are looking forward to the next one. We would once again like to express our heartfelt thanks to the *Johannesgemeinde* and everyone who contributed to this vibrant celebration of choir music in our Church.

3. Leadership

In the last report, we expressed some of the problems we were facing on the leadership front. We are therefore very happy to report that we have been able to resolve many of these concerns since then. At the last Representative's Meeting held on the occasion of the Choir Festival in Pretoria, elections of all offices on the Association Council had to be held and we were able to fill all but one of the positions. The newly elected Association Council is as follows:

Association Director:	Dieter Hinze
Association Deputy Director:	Mark Rohwer
Spiritual Advisor:	Udo Lütge
Secretary:	Nicola Beneke
Leader Northern Region:	Mark Rohwer
Deputy Leader Northern Region:	Linde-Marie Hartmann
Leader Central Region:	Jochen Hinze
Deputy Leader Central Region:	Hugo Paul
Leader Southern Region:	Vacant - this role will be fulfilled by the UELC Choir Committee
Deputy Leader Central Region:	Ingrid Lütge

This provides us with a largely new leadership group and we are thankful for the willingness of all those elected to help us guide our Association into the future. I would like to thank the former members of the Council for their input too.

4. Challenges and Responses

Many challenges remain. The Covid period resulted in the closure of many choirs. Our Association is now smaller than it has been in a while. Many of the same challenges that confront our congregations also confront this ministry of our

Church. It will be important that we carefully consider these challenges and find constructive and innovative ways to respond. The Association Council commits itself to this process and is planning renewed discussions on this topic, as well as a continued focus on training (see below). The Southern Region has begun a few new projects to promote choir music. The collaboration with the Hermannsburg School at our Circuit Festivals in one of these and we plan to develop this relationship with Hermannsburg and are looking to perhaps invite more schools to join us. A regional "Schütz Kinder- und Jugendchor" has been officially launched. Under the leadership of Gerard'd du Toit, the Head of Music at Hermannsburg School, a group of approximately 30 choristers between the ages of 9 and 18 have begun with regular practices and music development. The UELC congregation has begun collaborating with choristers from their communities to prepare and host regular community concerts (two per year). This initiative has got off to a good start. While each of our regions is different, we should consider what is possible and what resources are available to promote choir music in our Church and beyond it. Making use of such offers as the recent Schützwoche, held under the leadership of Roderich Kreile, the former Director of the *Dresdner Kreuzchor*. I was fortunate to be able to attend this week in Hermannsburg in July 2023 and was able to learn much and enjoy inspirational music together with others.

5. Training

In 2019 we had begun a comprehensive training programme for conductors. This collaborative training programme between our church and the FELSISA makes use of local teachers and German professional musicians to equip conductors for this ministry and to give them valuable experience in conducting. These courses run over two years and offer participants valuable teaching and experience in leading a choir. The first half of the programme was successfully completed in May 2019 and the second half should have been done in 2020. Unfortunately Covid also prevented this from happening. We are therefore very happy to be able to confirm that the second part of the course will now take place from 18 to 23 March 2024. *Landeskirchenmusikdirektor* Markus Leidenberger has confirmed his willingness and availability to lead the course and we are busy finalising the details with a committee that includes two representatives from our Association and two from the Choir Association of the FELSISA. We are thankful for the good co-operation we have been able to enjoy on this front in the last few months and for the opportunity to be able to participate in such training.

In addition to this, we have begun with basic introductory courses for conductors at a regional level. The first such course took place in Piet Retief in January 2023. 13 participants from our congregations in the Central region and from a local FELSISA congregation gave very positive feedback about this initiative and we are planning to offer more such courses.

6. The way forward

We are grateful that we have been able to report many positive developments and remain determined to find ways to continue to developing this important ministry of our Church into the future. May the God who sees us, bless this ministry and, through it, our Church and communities.

Yours in Christ,



Pastor Udo Lütge

(Chairman and Spiritual Advisor of the NELCSA Choir Association, on behalf of the Association Council)