



Report by Church Council to Synod 2023 “Hope- Live it!”



5 **1. Introduction**

6 **Hope – Live it! With this message we begin our new synod period in the year 2023.**

7 In the first letter of Peter, chapter 1, verse 3 and 4 we read: *“Praise be to the God and Father*
8 *of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through*
9 *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish,*
10 *spoil, or fade.”*

11 In this passage, Peter links our new birth to “a living hope”. The hope Peter speaks of is not
12 the wishful thinking usually associated with the word *hope* today. We might say, “I hope it
13 doesn’t rain,” or “I hope I pass the test,” Or “I hope that things improve in our country.”

14 Our Hope is rooted in God and in God’s promise. It is the affirmation that God is faithful and
15 remains in charge of our world and all that happens in it.

16 For us as Christians, our hope is built on Jesus Christ and what he taught and lived. It is built
17 on the fact that Jesus died on the cross for us and was raised from the dead after three days.

18 Hope is proclaimed to us at our baptism. Here we are given a new birth into a living hope.
19 This hope is not something that we do or earn. It is a gift from God to us, that we accept
20 through our faith.

21 Hope is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Hope knows what God has done in Christ and waits for the
22 fulfilment of God’s promises not passively, but by actively participating in the plan of God for
23 this world. Hope motivates us to act.

24 Hope wants to release us from the fear of the powers and principalities of this world and
25 encourages believers to move ahead despite the many obstacles surrounding them. Hope
26 allows us to imagine—and then create—a country and world that is different to the one that
27 we fear.

28 We have hope in the grace and love but also power of God: Every time that we pray the Lord’s
29 Prayer, we express this hope and ask God to allow us to be part of this kingdom - “your
30 Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

31 Our world and our country need hope. Hope that proclaims Jesus Christ. Hope that assures
32 us that there is a future and that we can make a difference.

33 We have hope. May God, in His power and love enable us to live it in our country and our
34 world.

35 Overview of the period 2022-2023

36 The previous report of church council presented at synod session 2021 held in October 2022
37 covered the years 2020-2022. Consequently, this report will cover ten months. We are
38 thankful that the long isolation period forced on us by the pandemic is now over. Many
39 congregations are still feeling the effects of this time but in most congregations, service
40 attendance has increased and the congregational life has resumed much as it was before the
41 pandemic. Many congregations have continued offering online church services which are still
42 being used and appreciated. We thank God for His guidance during this difficult time of the
43 Covid-19 pandemic.

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46 1. Deaths

47 Pastor Gottfried Drüsedau passed away in Stralsund, Germany on the 2nd of December 2022
48 at the age of 92. He had worked as a pastor in St Peter's Pretoria congregation for many
49 years.

50 2. Ending of Service

51 It is with regret that we take leave of the following pastors:

52 Pastor Dieter Klee accepted an appointment with the Hanoverian Evangelical Lutheran
53 Church in Germany and ended his service with the NELCSA on the 31st of December 2022.
54 He had been a pastor of NELCSA for many years and served in the congregations of
55 Winterton, New Hanover and Kempton Park. We thank him for his dedicated service to
56 NELCSA and wish him God's blessing for his way forward.

57 Rolf and Jessica Schmidt who have relocated to America and will be serving in the Evangelical
58 Lutheran Church of America. Rolf served in the United Evangelical Lutheran Congregation
59 and Jessica in the Lutheran Congregation Dolphin Coast. We will miss them and their input
60 but wish them everything of the best for the new phase of their lives.

61 3. Retirements

62 Our former bishop, Dr Horst Müller retired at the end of 2022. We thank him for the many
63 dedicated years of service as pastor and bishop in which he served and led our church as
64 through times in which difficult decisions often had to be made.

65 4. Lay-led congregations, congregations that are currently served through interim
66 measures and vacant congregations.

67 4.1 Nelspruit, Polokwane and Modjajiskloof

68 Presently three congregations, namely Polokwane and Modjajiskloof since 2001 and Nelspruit
69 since 2015, are led by lay members of the congregation. A lay leader of the congregation is a
70 member of the laity in any congregation who has been chosen as a leader by the rest of the
71 congregation. These leaders are encouraged to attend the co-worker courses of the NELCSA.
72 The congregations remain part of the NELCSA and are represented at synod.

73 4.2 Evangelical Lutheran Church on the East Rand (ELCER)

74 Retired Pastor Charles Paine is currently serving in the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the
75 East Rand (ELCER). The congregation is struggling to meet its obligations in respect of
76 pastor's salary and Church costs. We thank Pastor Paine for his service in this congregation.

77 4.3 Vaal Triangle

78 The pastor's post in the Vaal Triangle congregation became vacant in January 2023 when
79 Pastor Randolph Kassier moved to the Braunschweig congregation. Church Council
80 approached retired Pastor Friedel Lisse, who had served both in the Evangelical Lutheran
81 Church in Namibia and later in the Evangelische Stadtmission in Südafrika (ESSA). He agreed
82 to serve in the congregation as a caretaker pastor. He has been serving the congregation
83 since January 2023.

84 4.4 Trinity Zululand

85 The pastor's post in the Trinity Zululand congregation has been vacant since January 2021.
86 Pastor Hugo Filter agreed to serve here after his retirement. We thank him for his willingness
87 to continue serving after his retirement.

88 4.5 Verden-Dundee

89 The pastor's post of Verden-Dundee has been vacant since the retirement of Pastor Werner
90 Harms in 2011. Currently the congregation is being served by the pastor of the Uelzen
91 congregation of FELSISA, Pastor Marlon Hiestermann. FELSISA and NELCSA are not in a

92 declared church fellowship and this arrangement is an exception. In August 2023 the
 93 agreement between Pastor Hiestermann, the FELSISA and the NELCSA was extended for a
 94 further period of three years.

95 5. Vacant Pastors' Post

96 NELCSA is presently experiencing a severe shortage of pastors. Church Council is looking at
 97 various options to have the congregations served in the interim period until hopefully, new full-
 98 time pastors can again be employed in most of our congregations.

99 The pastor's post of the St. Peter's by the Lake congregation became vacant in August 2021
 100 when Pastor Dieter Trümpelmann left the service of the church. Kempton Park followed in
 101 January 2023, with the relocation of Pastor Dieter Klee to Germany. Kroondal congregation
 102 officially became vacant when Bishop Theo Jäckel assumed his position in February 2023. In
 103 the United Evangelical Lutheran Congregation one of the two pastoral positions in the
 104 congregation became vacant when Pastor Rolf Schmidt was released to work in the
 105 Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

106 All these congregations are vibrant with strong leadership. We therefore do not doubt that they
 107 will continue to flourish and that the period of vacancy could be a good time for the
 108 congregation, where even more congregation members live their God-given gifts to the glory
 109 of God and the strengthening of their congregation. The shortage of pastors that can be called
 110 is however of serious concern for us. We are grateful for the increasing number of students
 111 now studying at the University of Stellenbosch but are also aware of the shortage of pastors
 112 not only in the NELCSA but also in the ELCSA (Cape-Church) and the Evangelical Lutheran
 113 Church in Namibia (ELCIN (GELC)). Church Council is investigating interim measures for
 114 these congregations, which have been, or will be communicated to them.

115 In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 9, verses 37 and 38, Jesus Christ tells us: *"The harvest is*
 116 *plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers*
 117 *into his harvest field."*

118 All human planning and endeavours are important, but it is our Lord who provides and sends
 119 out workers in the church. We are asked to request this from him continuously through prayer.
 120 Let us continue to trust in God's promise and remain steadfast in prayer in the assurance that
 121 He will not disappoint us.

122 6. Closure of the Lutheran Congregation Dolphin Coast

123 In 2017 Pastor Ron Küsel was tasked to investigate the viability of a possible new
 124 congregation in the Durban region. As a result, the LCDC was founded on 25 November 2018.
 125 Pastor Ron Küsel was elected as the first pastor in a 50% position. The German Seafarers'
 126 Mission in Durban subsequently offered Pastor Küsel a 100% position which he accepted,
 127 thereby vacating his position at LCDC. Pastor Jessica Schmidt followed him as caretaker
 128 pastor of the congregation.

129 During the last years the congregation had lost members and had not grown sufficiently. The
 130 current members had also become overwhelmed with the administrative work required for the
 131 congregation to function.

132 An investigation team consisting of three members of the congregation, three members of the
 133 NELCSA Ministry and Discipleship team and two members of the UELC congregation,
 134 launched an investigation into the further viability of the congregation. After the investigation
 135 the team proposed that the LCDC be dissolved, that the current contract with the owner of the
 136 building used for worship services be terminated, and that all other matters related to the
 137 closure of the congregation be addressed.

138 The investigation team also suggested that the members of the congregation consider one of
 139 three options for their future:

140 1. The possibility of having regular worship services together with FELSISA members
141 living in the greater Ballito area.

142 2. The current LCDC members join another NELCSA congregation of their choice and
143 form a house group that worships together regularly in the Ballito area.

144 3. The entire LCDC project to be disbanded and each member be asked to find a new
145 spiritual home.

146 Discussions took place between members of the investigation team, congregation members,
147 representatives of the FELSISA and the bishops of both NELCSA and FELSISA regarding the
148 viability of forming a combined congregation in the area. Unfortunately, this is not a possibility
149 at this stage.

150 A Special General Meeting of the congregation is planned for the 06th of August 2023, where
151 the congregation members could decide to close the Lutheran Congregation Dolphin Coast
152 as a legal entity. Should the decision to recommend the dissolution of the congregation be
153 made to Church Council and is accepted as such by Church Council, Synod will be requested
154 to ratify this decision.

155 7. West Rand Lutheran Community Congregation (WRLCC)

156 The financial situation in the West Rand Lutheran Community Congregation has improved
157 dramatically. A large portion of their debt has been repaid. Following a period of vacancy, the
158 congregation approached Church Council for a 25% pastoral position for the congregation and
159 this was approved. Pastor Remo Koehne was elected as pastor of the congregation with a
160 25% position. We thank our Lord for the good progress that the congregation has made
161 regarding their financial situation and hope that they will soon be able to grow the pastor's
162 post again.

163 8. Johannesgemeinde Pretoria

164 The six-year contract of Pastor Nicole Otte-Kempf will come to an end in August 2024. Pastor
165 Otte-Kempf has indicated that she would not request an extension of her term. This decision
166 has been accepted with regret due to the good work she has done in the congregation, but
167 also with understanding. At their Annual General Meeting in March 2023 the congregation
168 voted to request that the Evangelical Church in Germany provide a new pastor for 2024. This
169 was done after the post was advertised within South Africa and no suitable candidate applied.

170 9. Congregational Jubilees

171 The Augsburg congregation is celebrating its centenary as a congregation and the Elandskraal
172 congregation the 100 Year Jubilee of Elandskraal Church Building in 2023.

173 We congratulate them and wish them God's blessing for their way forward.

174 10. Theological Training

175 Pastor Felix Meylahn has been appointed as Director of Studies of the United Evangelical
176 Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (UELCSA). He will accompany our students during their
177 studies. We thank the Evangelical Church in Germany for the financial support of this position
178 and wish Pastor Meylahn all the best. Church Council has included additional funding in the
179 budget for 2024-2025 to co-finance this post.

180 The following students are currently studying at Stellenbosch University: Tristan Krüger (5),
181 P.J. Hanekom (5), Hans-Christoph Lange (MTh), Rutendo Gora (4), Bernard Schiele (3),
182 Chundre Phillipus (1). Hermann Düvel, Ingrid Van Sittert and Anika Sanders are currently being
183 trained for ministry as interns.

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187 **11. Institutions linked to the Church**

188 **11.1 Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg (DSH)**

189 The Hermannsburg school is one of the oldest schools in the country. It was established in the
190 1856 to cater for the children of missionary families, and soon also as high school for children
191 from Lutheran Congregations. Although the name is “Deutsche Schule”, the instruction
192 language is English, with German offered with the aim to attain the German Language Diploma
193 (Deutsches Sprachdiplom).

194 The school is an independent private school, to which the NELCSA provides a chaplain in the
195 person of Pastor Rene Risch. Pastor Risch has a shared post consisting of 50% for the
196 Hermannsburg school, 25% for the Hermannsburg congregation and 25% for the youth work
197 in KwaZulu-Natal. This shared post is understandably a constant balancing act for the pastor.
198 We are thankful that his request for a Chaplain’s assistant (School pastor assistant) was
199 granted and on the 17th of April 2023 Ms. Nonjabulo Shezi started working as his assistant.
200 She will also be involved in other aspects of school life but will mainly assist the school pastor
201 in the various tasks that he is involved in during an average school day.

202 The present contract between Pastor Risch, NELCSA, the Hermannsburg congregation and
203 the school ends at the end of 2023. All parties are in the process of deciding if they would
204 support another contract of three years.

205 **11.2 Lutheran Community Outreach Foundation (LCOF), Hillbrow**

206 The LCOF was established in the 1990’s as a ministry of the Church of Peace (Friedenskirche)
207 congregation, in response to the rapid change in Hillbrow. Over the years it continued to grow
208 and expand, due to good funding received from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Bread
209 for the World and Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Lower Saxony (ELM), amongst others.
210 Under the current director, Mr Robert Michel, it continues to do excellent work, providing
211 counselling and skills development primarily to migrants and refugees living in South Africa.

212 **11.3 Refugee and Migrant Ministry (RMM)**

213 This project is largely funded by Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Lower Saxony (ELM), with
214 NELCSA Ministry and Discipleship Fund also contributing a portion. Pastor Rosalie Madika
215 does this ministry, located at St Peter’s Pretoria. It focuses on French-speaking refugees and
216 migrants from Africa. Since ELM does not enter into agreements with congregations, but only
217 with partner churches, this project is linked to NELCSA, although it is run at St Peter’s
218 congregation Pretoria.

219 **12. Inter Church Relationships**

220 **12.1 The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (UELCSA)**

221 The focus of UELCSA is on the Theological Education linked to the University of Stellenbosch,
222 and the training for the ministry in general. The three member churches of UELCSA are ELCSA
223 (Cape Church), NELCSA and ELCIN / GELC (Namibia). UELCSA Church Council has adopted
224 a strategy of mostly monthly virtual meetings. In support of the theological education UELCSA
225 has purchased a house for the Director of Studies for our churches, Pastor Felix Meylahn, to
226 live in. This house will also serve as a UELCSA training centre for our students and will house
227 a library for their studies.

228 **12.2 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA)**

229 There has always been a close bond between the NELCSA and the ELCSA through our
230 shared confession and history. In the past we shared the same office building and had
231 common theological training at the Lutheran Theological Institute in Pietermaritzburg. Over
232 the last years there has been little contact. After the last synod in October 2022 the NELCSA
233 and the ELCSA (Cape Church) were approached by ELCSA, via the presiding bishop, Bishop
234 Nkosinathi Myaka. The bishops met soon after. At a further meeting it was decided that the
235 bishops of the three churches would meet twice a year to get to know one another, work

236 together where possible and to move toward greater unity between the churches wherever
 237 this is possible. As Church Council we hope that these meetings between the bishops will
 238 improve the relationship between the churches. We also encourage all our congregations to
 239 build bridges to local ELCSA congregations wherever possible and to investigate projects that
 240 can be done together.

241 12.3 Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA)

242 There are many connections between members of the NELCSA and the FELSISA due to
 243 family ties, business relationships and friendships. On congregational level there are some
 244 regions where good co-operation exists. Much depends on the willingness of the clergy to
 245 engage and interact. In some areas combined services take place on a yearly basis, while in
 246 others there is very little co-operation.

247 At their synod in May this year the new church leadership was elected. The new bishop is
 248 Bishop Helmut Paul. We congratulate him on his election and hope that there will be a good
 249 and constructive relationship between the churches.

250 A small team of two theologians from each of NELCSA and FELSISA had been tasked to
 251 discuss theological positions of the churches and to deal with various topics to establish to
 252 what extent we can work together.

253 12.4 The Evangelische Stadtmission in Südafrika (ESSA)

254 The Evangelische Stadtmission was founded by the St Chrischona Pilgrim Mission near Basel
 255 in Switzerland. The City Mission is a church that grew out of spiritual revivalism in the mid-
 256 19th century. As the name suggests, the work of the City Mission concentrates on larger cities
 257 and in the German language. They are currently looking at the issue of working in more
 258 languages than just German. Wherever possible there is co-operation between the NELCSA
 259 and ESSA.

260 12.5 Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

261 The NELCSA is part of the Lutheran World Federation. The Lutheran World Federation is a
 262 global communion of 149 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 77 million
 263 Christians in 99 countries. The Assembly, as the highest governing body of the Lutheran World
 264 Federation, meets every six years at a venue chosen by its Council based on invitations
 265 received from its member churches. The Assembly gathers representatives of its member
 266 churches, international ecumenical and church organizations, partner agencies from the
 267 development and mission fields, guests, the media, and others. The hosting church in Poland
 268 for the year 2023, is the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland. We are
 269 thankful that we can be part of this assembly and the larger Lutheran family. The Lutheran
 270 World Federation also supports the studies of our students in Stellenbosch through bursaries.
 271 A member of our church attended the Lay Leaders in Church Seminar in June 2023. We thank
 272 LWF for this opportunity.

273 12.6 The Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA)

274 The Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) is one of three regional expressions of
 275 the Lutheran World Federation in Africa. It is based in Bonaero Park. It focusses on Mission
 276 and Diakonia, especially through Aids, TB and Malaria programmes, and on Christian
 277 Education, linked to Mission and Diakonia,

278 The NELCSA has the following institutional representatives at LUCSA:

279 Ms. Catherine Makwakwa – Diakonia

280 Pastor Dr. Detlev Tönsing and Ms. Inge Engelbrecht – Christian Education

281 Ms. Ann Mokhine and Pastor Dr. Gertrud Tönsing - Gender Justice & Women Empowerment.

282 Prof. Friedeburg Wenhold and Ms. Ann Mokhine - Women in Leadership

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285 12.7 Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)

286 The Evangelical Church in Germany is a federation of twenty-one Lutheran, Reformed and
 287 United Protestant regional churches and denominations in Germany, which collectively
 288 encompass most Protestants in that country. The person in charge of the Southern Africa
 289 region is Oberkirchenrat Rev. Marc Reusch.

290 Currently there are two pastors sent via the EKD: Pastor Wilko Hunger in Northrand, and
 291 Pastor Nicole Otte-Kempf in Pretoria - Johannes congregation. For NELCSA this exchange
 292 with Pastors from Germany remains an important and enriching experience. The EKD offers
 293 training programs in various areas for partner churches. We have had participants from some
 294 of our congregations who have given positive reports of these courses and have in turn
 295 enriched the congregations of the NELCSA that they serve in. We thank the EKD for the good
 296 relationship, support and all the opportunities offered.

297 The NELCSA has, for many years, enjoyed a close relationship with the EKD. In January
 298 2023 a delegation from the EKD visited NELCSA. Fruitful discussions took place, and we are
 299 hopeful of many more years of good co-operation.

300 12.8 South African Council of Churches (SACC)

301 The SACC provides an ecumenical platform where member churches from many different
 302 denominations and affiliated organisations meet to discuss theological, political, and ethical
 303 issues of our country and world. It is governed by a national conference that meets once every
 304 three years. The resolutions of the conference are implemented by a central committee that
 305 meets annually. During the last year the SACC has been very active in their campaign against
 306 corruption and in supporting "whistle blowers." It has also been grappling with the issue of
 307 migrants and refugees and their situation in South Africa.

308 During this year the leadership of the SACC launched an initiative to visit all its member
 309 churches personally to get to know them better and foster cooperation. A meeting between
 310 the SACC and the Exco of NELCSA took place on the 4th of April 2023 in the NELCSA church
 311 office. Here the NELCSA and the SACC introduced themselves as well as their aims and
 312 objectives. It was a fruitful discussion where co-operation was discussed.

313 12.9 Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)

314 A memorandum of Understanding was signed between the NELCSA and the DRC in July
 315 2022, in which amongst others the following areas of cooperation were identified:

- 316 - Ministers may exchange pulpits.
- 317 - Ministers of the two churches may be called among themselves subject to each
 318 church's orders and procedures.
- 319 - Theological students are trained together wherever possible.
- 320 - Theological lecturers are mutually recognized and utilized.
- 321 - When candidate ministers are called from one church to another the bone fide
 322 migration of these takes place in mutual consultation between the relevant church
 323 structures.
- 324 - The churches negotiate jointly with university authorities to ensure the best interests
 325 of the various churches.
- 326 - Congregations of the churches can cooperate with each other depending on
 327 circumstances regarding ministry and other local actions. Collaborative ministry takes
 328 place without compromising membership and with mutual respect for diversity.
- 329 - Regional churches are encouraged to explore areas of cooperation.

330 We are grateful for these possible areas of cooperation between the churches and hope for a
 331 future fruitful working together in the Kingdom of God.

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334 12.10 Church Unity Commission (CUC)

335 The Church Unity Commission endeavours to strengthen relationships and unity among
 336 member churches and observer churches through continued discussions on doctrinal
 337 reconciliation and seeking cooperation in theological training and formation. It is also active
 338 in development of common liturgical resources, development of centres of hope and promoting
 339 further co-operation in ministry and mission at local level. This includes the development of
 340 models of local ecumenism and united congregations. There has been growth in membership
 341 in the few past years. Since its foundation in 1958 by the 4 founding churches (Anglican,
 342 Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, the CUC added as a member church the Nederduits
 343 Gereformeerde Kerk in SA in 2019 and now in 2023 NELCSA has received full membership.
 344 This brings the total of member churches to 6 and 4 observer members. We are grateful to
 345 be part of this ecumenical movement. It can also be an aid especially for those congregations
 346 that can no longer sustain themselves.

347 12.11 Evangelical – Lutheran Mission in Niedersachsen (Evangelisch- Lutherisches
 348 Missionswerk in Niedersachsen) (ELM)

349 We are grateful for the long-standing good relationship with the ELM. The new representative
 350 for Southern Africa, Rev. Dr. Joe Lüdemann, who is well known to many of us, and has lived
 351 and worked here for many years, has continued the good working relationship. He came for
 352 two visits to South Africa this year. During this visit, meetings took place and mutual concerns
 353 were discussed. The virtual meetings between the ELM, the German carrier churches and the
 354 overseas partners that were begun during the Covid-19 lockdown period have continued.
 355 Various topics of mutual interest are discussed at these meetings.

356 Various projects are supported via the ELM. The carrier churches and donors make funds
 357 available, and the ELM is then tasked to identify and monitor projects. Within NELCSA's
 358 domain these are mainly the Refugee and Migrant Ministry in Pretoria and the Lutheran
 359 Community Outreach Foundation in Hillbrow. A one-week seminar – Peace Places to Go - was
 360 also coordinated and funded by the ELM and took place in April of this year.

361 13. Church internal matters

362 13.1 Discussion Paper on human and homosexuality

363 At our synod in 2022 Pastor Dr. Gertrud Tönsing confirmed that the work, as tasked by Church
 364 Synod for the Theological Study commission, regarding Human and Homosexuality has been
 365 concluded. It was then discussed on how to proceed with this document and decided that
 366 Church Council should make a suggestion for the next synod.

367 Church Council emphasises that we are thankful for the work that has been done by the
 368 Theological Study Commission. The topic investigated is a very emotive and controversial
 369 issue. Few issues test the ability of church members and theologians to define the nature of
 370 the Christian life quite like the question of how the church responds to homosexual Christians.
 371 We are grateful for the many discussions that took place on the discussion paper of the
 372 Theological Study Commission and hope that further discussions will take place.

373 According to our South African Constitution (Section 9,4) no person may be discriminated
 374 against in any manner due to their sexual orientation. This also applies to the employment
 375 practice of the NELCSA. Christians within our church do however have very different views
 376 on homosexuality. Some people assume that all homosexual acts are sinful, while others
 377 believe that for a percentage of every population, homosexuality is a given, a life orientation
 378 that they did not choose and that therefore should not be condemned. A fact that few would
 379 deny is, that many if not most of our congregations have homosexual people as active and
 380 practicing members. Some have identified themselves as such openly, while others have
 381 chosen not to do so for various reasons.

382 The issue of homosexuality is not only a theoretical theological issue. It is something that
 383 affects people that we know and who are part of many of our congregations. Church Council

384 therefor believes that the discussion on this topic should continue, bearing in mind that we are
 385 talking about people and fellow members of the body of Christ. For this reason, Church
 386 Council proposes to Synod that no vote should take place at Synod on whether this document
 387 should be adopted as an official position paper of the NELCSA. Rather, we should continue
 388 to treat it as a discussion paper, that wishes to promote a lively debate within our church,
 389 allowing different opinions, while not condemning those who see things differently than we do.

390 Human sexuality is a far broader subject than homosexuality. Sexuality is elemental in human
 391 beings. It is also not just physical. It includes all thinking, feeling, and interacting with other
 392 human beings.

393 What is responsible Christian sexuality? If one were to ask this question in the Bible study
 394 groups of the congregations the answers would probably be manifold. We live in a time of
 395 much confusion in this regard. Norms that guided previous generations are often questioned
 396 and challenged by younger people. Many parents have been confronted with this fact by their
 397 children. We live in a time when many people, who are Christians, live in a sexual relationship
 398 with one another without being married. In Africa the issue of polygamy is often discussed
 399 amongst Christians, as is the issue of the free availability of pornography. Every day we as
 400 Christians are confronted with different views regarding sexuality. Church Council has
 401 requested Synod Council to allocate time at this Synod Session to discuss the broader topic
 402 of responsible human sexuality. It was emphasized that the discussions should be about
 403 listening to and attempting to understand one another as fellow brothers and sisters of the
 404 body of Christ, with the request to continue these discussions within the congregations.

405 13.2 Church Structures and Ministry Models

406 A growing number of congregations are no longer able to afford a full-time pastor. They
 407 however remain active and valuable members of the NELCSA. In the past Church Council
 408 has been open to the different situations of the congregations and has implemented various
 409 forms of serving these congregations, as mentioned earlier in this report. The need for a
 410 systematic investigation into different church structures and ministry models has become
 411 evident.

412 At the Synod Session in 2022 it was decided that a defined process should be followed to
 413 investigate the Church Structure and Ministry Models for NELCSA in a systematic and
 414 comprehensive manner. The following people were appointed as facilitators to lead this
 415 process: Ms Tshinyi Magoro, Mr Bernd Klingenberg, Pastor Udo Lütge, Ms Ann Mokhine, Ms
 416 Nicky Wenhold, Ms Carmen Westermeyer, Mr Rolf Lütge and Pastor Martin Büttner.

417 The group will be giving a progress report on the progress of the investigation at Synod. We
 418 thank them for their dedication and input.

419 13.3 New NELCSA office

420 In 2019, the then ELCSA (N-T) began to investigate alternatives to the office in Bonaero Park.
 421 Church Council decided on the Johannesgemeinde in Pretoria as the best option. This was
 422 ratified by Synod in 2019. Plans were drawn up for an office building, but due to various
 423 complications with the municipality very little progress was made. At its meeting in February
 424 2023, Church Council decided to situate the new church office of the NELCSA on the property
 425 of the residence of the bishop at 570 Witogje Street, die Wilgers, Pretoria. This decision needs
 426 to be ratified by Synod.

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432 Signed by Church Council and Ecclesiastical Council

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434	Theo Jäckel,	Bishop
435	Henning Springer,	President of Synod
436	Petra Röhrs,	Deputy to the Bishop
437	Udo Lütge	Ordained Member of Church Council
438	Vernon Filter,	Treasurer
439	Friedeburg Wenhold,	Lay Member Northern Circuit
440	Ann Mokhine,	Lay Member Central Circuit
441	Johann Engelbrecht,	Lay Member Eastern Circuit
442	Dieter Küsel,	Lay Member Southern Circuit
443	Remo Koehne,	Dean Central Circuit
444	Mark Meier,	Dean Eastern Circuit
445	Dirk Köstlin,	Dean Southern Circuit
446	Detlev Tönsing	Dean Northern Circuit