

NORTHEASTERN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

Minutes

of the 1st Session of the VIII Church Synod
at the NELCSA in Augsburg Congregation from 19 – 22 October 2023

Hope- Live it!

1. **OPENING AND WELCOME**

1.1 **Opening**

The First Ordinary Session of the Eighth Church Synod is opened on Thursday afternoon at 18h30 with a church service in the Concordia Congregation, Augsburg. The liturgy is conducted by Pastor Mark Meier. Dr. Imke Engelbrecht conducts the sermon on the text in Lamentations 3, 21-24.

All Synod Delegates are commissioned because it is the First Session of Synod.

Sylvia Mamorare and Mogopodi Pule are commissioned on Friday morning. (Ref 5.1.1)

Marianne von Delft stand-in for Ingrid Kruse (Hillcrest)

Stefan Lucht stand-in for Nina de Vries (UJELC)

Naomi Leshabane stand-in for Andreas Rüschi (St Peter's Pretoria)

Leonora Klein stand-in for Siyabonga Mpanza (St Peter's by the Lake)

Edwin Meyer stand-in for Heinz Dedekind (Verden/Dundee)

Werner Dyer is excused from 12h00 on Saturday.

Egon Hinze is excused on Saturday.

1.2 **Welcome**

The President of Synod, Mr Henning Springer, welcomes all present, especially those who are attending their first Synod:

"I welcome you to the first sitting of the VIII Church Synod of NELCSA.

It feels like yesterday, that some of us gathered at the North Rand congregation for the last sitting of Synod. Due to the Covid pandemic we had to postpone most of the last sitting of synod by one year and therefore we now have this synod just 12 months later.

Before we had even finalised the minutes of the last sitting, we started to plan this sitting which is starting today. At the time of the first meeting of the synod preparation team early in this year, our country went through a difficult time of loadshedding, our currency, the South African Rand lost its value dramatically, unemployment figures soared, and a significant number of family members, friends and congregation members were either planning to leave our country, or were at least thinking of the possibility of emigration. Many people lost all hope.

The preparation team decided on the theme "Hope – live it" as we believe that there is hope, especially the hope given to us through our Lord and Saviour.

Looking in the Bible and in Church history, there are many times when people felt hopeless, and God intervened and changed their lives and their situation in life.

I think of Abram, when he and his wife were old and past the normal childbearing age and they had lost all hope of ever being parents. But God intervened and the descendants of Abraham are now as many as there are stars in the sky.

I think of the sick person who was lying at the pool near Bethesda. When Jesus asked him: "Do you want to get well?" the person replied: "Sir, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else gets down ahead of me." His situation was hopeless!

Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

Jesus gave this man hope! And the man took his mat, and he lived the hope Jesus had given him.

For the next three days, I hope and pray, that we as a church experience the hope that we are given by our God and that we can find ways as a church and individuals to live this hope.

May our God bless this first sitting of the VIII Church Synod of NELCSA."

2. **CONSTITUTING THE SYNOD**

2.1 **Establishing the Quorum**

2.2.1 Attendance Register

Anna Kaduma Gumbie, as Secretary of Synod Council, holds rollcall. (Appendix 1)

It is established that the Synod is in quorum as 78 members are present.

The President, Henning Springer, declares the Synod officially constituted. The Synod was prepared and convened in accordance with the Constitution.

- 2.2.2 Reference to Standing Orders of the Church Synod
The President refers to the rules and procedures of Synod. He points to forms to be used for the formulation of proposals and requests and explains the required number of secondments. He thanks Bishop Theo Jäckel, Church Council and Church administration for the preparations.

2.2 Procedures of Synod

2.2.1 Appointing Committees

- a) Formulating Committee:
Mark Rohwer, Ann Mokhine
- b) Legal Committee:
Henning Springer, Karin Meyer, Udo Lütge
- c) Nomination & Election Committee:
Friedeburg Wenhold (Convenor), Jack Magoro, Penny Summersgill, Bernd Klingenberg, Reino Hansen
- d) Audio-Visual Technician:
Martin Büttner
- e) Code of Conduct:
Elke Carrihill, Wilko Hunger, Sarona Matlala
Ann Mokhine introduces the Code of Conduct
- f) Procedure during Elections:
Udo Lütge

2.2.2 Finalizing the Discussion Groups

The Synod delegates and guests were divided into 15 groups.

The following are the group facilitators:

Detlev Tönsing, Ann Mokhine, Dirk Köstlin, Remo Koehne, Mark Meier, Petra Röhrs, Mr Vernon Filter, Friedeburg Wenhold, Udo Lütge, Dieter Küsel, Johann Engelbrecht, Heino Küsel, Anna Kaduma-Gumbie, Stella Cockburn, Bernd Klingenberg.

The following are the group reporters:

Ingrid Woodrow, Maria Sieburg, Leonora Klein, Tanya Wichmann, Alec Gumbie, Nicky Wenhold, Langa Ndlela, Mogopodi Pule, Helene Schmidt, PJ Hanekom, Jack Magoro, Heather Claase, Jan Duvenhage, Andrew Bee, Heidrun Wenhold.

The Synod Planning Team members that were not delegates, and other visitors were also divided into groups with group facilitators and group reporters.

2.2.3 Call for Nominations of Candidates to be elected in various positions

The call for nominations of candidates and the election procedure is explained by the convenor of the nominations committee.

2.2.4 Nomination of Secretaries

Minutes will be kept by Liselotte Knöcklein (administrative officer from church office) as scribe, supported by Secretaries of the Synod Council, Anna Kaduma-Gumbie and Stella Cockburn.

2.3 Introduction of the Augsburg Congregation

Karsten Hinze, as member of the Augsburg congregation, presents an introduction into the history and current life in the Augsburg congregation. Synod congratulates the Augsburg congregation, that is celebrating its centenary this year, being founded in 1923.

3. REPORTS

All reports received were sent to delegates by email and are taken as read. The President expresses thanks for well written reports.

3.1 Church Council Report

Bishop Theo Jäckel introduces the Church and Ecclesiastical Council and thanks Synod for the privilege to serve on Church Council. He also emphasizes, that it is a Report from Church Council and not a Bishop's Report.

During the presentation, the following additions to the report are made:

3.1.1 Ann Mokhine introduces the LWF Youth representatives, who are theology students of UELCSA at the Stellenbosch University:

PJ Hanekom was elected onto the LWF Council to represent the Youth on the LUCSA Council.

Tristan Krüger and Rutendo Gora are representing NELCSA at the LWF as Youth Reformers.

Rutendo Gora introduces a book:

'Journeys from the Crossroads: Stories on living, studying and doing theology.'

This book was written together with 10 other LWF Youth who are studying theology

globally. The intention of this book is to inspire theology students on their journey.

At the end of Synod, the Church Council report is adopted unopposed, with 12 abstentions representing the membership of Church and Ecclesiastical Council.

3.2 **Financial Report**

The **West Rand Lutheran Community Church (WRLCC)** is congratulated for their commitment to pay their debt. Arrears are now down to R ZERO from R1.75 million in 2019. They are also able to fund a ¼ pastor's post.

A motion is proposed to adopt the Budget Report

Proposed: Elizabeth Rommelspacher

Seconded: Elke Carrihill

Against: 0

Abstain: 12

The motion is carried by majority

A motion is proposed to adopt the Financial Report

Proposed: Ron Küsel

Seconded: Karsten Hinze

Against: 0

Abstain: 8

The motion is carried by majority

3.3 **LWF Young Reformers**

The written report is accepted by church synod.

3.4 **Ministry and Discipleship Team (MaD)**

Mark Meier, a member of the MaD Team gives a presentation to Synod. He encourages congregations to contact the MaD Team should they need any assistance or advice with their projects.

3.5 **Youth Ministry**

3.5.1 Southern and Eastern Circuits

3.5.2 Central and Northern Circuits

Julia Bingießer, Co-opted member to Synod for the Central and Northern Circuits' explains that it was not possible to send a report on the youth work in these circuits because of a lack of dedicated youth co-workers at the individual congregations. Several youth events for both the Northern and Central circuits are already planned for 2023 and 2024.

3.6 **Hermannsburg School Pastor**

The written report is accepted by church synod.

3.7 **Church Music**

3.7.1 General Church Music is presented by Dr. Mark Rohwer who is the co-opted member of Synod for Church Music in general.

3.7.2 Brass Band Association

3.7.3 Church Choir Association

3.7.4 Impact Music Ministry.

3.8 **Old Age Homes**

3.8.1 German Seniors Residence, Johannesburg

The written report is accepted by church synod.

3.9 **German Seafarers' Mission Durban**

The written report is accepted by church synod.

3.10 **Theological Education**

Pastor Felix Meylahn presents the Theological Training at the University of Stellenbosch and introduces the students who are present. He was appointed as the Director of Studies in Lutheran Theology through UELCSA. Other denominations have also registered for this course.

3.11 **Kailager (NELCSA Property)**

The Kailager property still needs funds for regular maintenance and long-term improvements. The

Kailager committee is requested to advertise the Kailager Camp regularly in congregations to create more awareness.

4. **BILLS CONCERNING CHURCH LAWS**

All Church Laws were sent to delegates by email and are taken as read.

4.1 **Church Law 1/2023 – Contributions and Schedule (Point 10: Budget 2024 2025 V6.3 final)**

Church Law 1 is put to the vote:

Abstain: 13

Against: 0

The law is passed by majority

4.2 **Church Law 2/2023**

Congregational Code, Section 17 (2) to be amended and Section 17 (3) to be added

Section 17 Quorum

- (1) A minimum of ___ (NUMBER to be inserted by congregation after decision at General Meeting.) voting members present shall constitute a quorum, provided that the meeting was properly convened in terms of Section 14.
- (2) If a quorum of an otherwise properly called meeting cannot be established due to insufficient participation, the Chair shall give notice, within two weeks, of another meeting in terms of section 14, without change of agenda, at which those members present shall constitute a quorum irrespective of the provisions of section 17 (1) of the Congregational Code subject to 17 (3) below. This fact shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- (3) No fewer than three voting members shall ever constitute a quorum.

The proposal for amendments to Church Law No 2/2023 Congregational Code Section 17 (2) and (3) is put to the vote.

Abstain: 4

Against: 0

The law as proposed is carried.

4.3 **Church Law 3/2023**

Congregational Code, Section 64 (1) to be amended

Section 64 Decision to Dissolve and Liquidate

- (1) The dissolution of the congregation shall be decided by an extraordinary General Meeting convened for this purpose. The resolution shall be effective only if at least two-thirds of its members in a legal sense as referred to in Section 5, are present and of these at least two-thirds have voted in favour of the dissolution. Section 20(1) of the Constitution of the NELCSA shall apply. Should the quorum required above not be realised, section 17(2) and 17(3) apply. A two-thirds majority in favour of the dissolution will be required at this second extraordinary General Meeting.
- (2) Once the dissolution of the congregation has been resolved, the extraordinary General Meeting shall issue directives concerning the liquidation of the assets of the congregation and shall appoint a committee to carry out the liquidation. The committee does this in accordance with the above-mentioned directives and in accordance with the relevant provisions of the laws of the country. Any assets remaining after the liquidation shall be transferred to NELCSA.
- (3) Should NELCSA also be dissolved or liquidated, then and in that event only, any assets remaining after liquidation shall be transferred to another Church, which is also a Non-Profit Organisation, having similar objectives as NELCSA. The extraordinary General Meeting, as referred to in Section 64(1), shall in terms of this provision decide to which organization the remaining assets will be transferred.

The proposal for amendments to Church Law No 3/2023 Congregational Code Section 64 (1) is put to the vote.

Abstain: 3

Against: 0

The law as proposed is carried.

4.4 **Church Law 4/2023**
Law on Pastors, Section 40 (3) to be amended

Section 40 Annual Leave

- (1) Annual leave with full pay will be granted on the following basis:
 - (a) up to the 40th birthday - 32 calendar days;
 - (b) thereafter up to the 50th birthday - 36 calendar days;
 - (c) after the 50th birthday - 42 calendar days.
- (2) Annual leave should be taken consecutively whenever possible. It should not be taken during high festive seasons.
- (3) The annual leave cycle starts on the 1st of March of every year. Annual leave shall not be accumulated. The immediate superior may grant exceptions for official reasons.
- (4) If the employment relationship begins or ends during the course of a particular year, pro rata leave will be granted.

The proposal for amendments to Church Law No 4/2023 Law on Pastors Section 40 (3) is put to the vote.

Abstain: 2

Against: 0

The law as proposed is carried.

5. **MOTIONS, PROPOSALS AND RULINGS**

Proposals, Motions and Rulings emanating from discussions during Synod:

5.1 **Motions from Church Council**

5.1.1 Proposal from an ad-hoc committee on Synod Delegates of Midrand Lutheran Church (MLC) to NELCSA Synod 2023.

At the visitation of the MLC from 1-3 September 2023, it was observed, that at the AGM where the election of Synod delegates took place, previous synod delegates were possibly misinformed about the term of office and eligibility for election.

Because of this issue, in terms of 'Rules of Procedure of Church Synod' section 3(4), Synod Council appointed the following members of the ad-hoc committee to investigate. D Tönsing (Chair), K Meyer, H Wenhold, A Gumbie, U Lütge.

Motion 1: Proposal from an ad-hoc committee on Synod Delegates of Midrand Lutheran Church to NELCSA Synod 2023

This committee recommends:

- a. That Synod accepts the delegates appointed by the AGM 2023 of Midrand Lutheran Church for the first sitting of the 8th Synod 2023, Sylvia Mamorare and Mogopodi Pule as valid, in view of - that the procedural difficulties were not in bad faith and did not totally invalidate the election - that the greater value is to ensure representation of MLC, as all congregations of NELCSA, as part of synod
- b. That synod recommends to MLC to again elect synod delegates at the next AGM, making it clear that all members are eligible to stand.
- c. That all congregations take this as a reminder that it is important to conduct AGMs and elections in accordance with the procedures and church laws of NELCSA, and that discrepancies should be remediated as soon as possible.

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

The proposal is accepted unanimously.

5.1.2 Closure of LCDC Congregation

A Special General Meeting of the congregation was held on the 6th of August 2023. The congregation members then decided on the closure of the Lutheran Congregation Dolphin Coast as a legal entity. The LCDC congregation has therefore voted for closure. The official closing service was held on 27th August 2023.

Motion 2: Dissolution of the LCDC congregation

The decision to recommend the dissolution of the congregation was made to Church Council and accepted as such by Church Council. Synod is requested to ratify this decision.

Against: 0

Abstain: 6

Motion is carried by majority

Motion 3: Renaming of LCDC Funds

Church Council proposes that the fund used to pay for the establishment of the LCDC congregation be reallocated to fund any Church growth and development projects within NELCSA and be renamed to 'Development Fund'. Church Council requests Synod to agree to this proposal.

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Motion is carried unanimously

- 5.1.3 Church Council requests synod to ratify the decisions firstly, to not build the current NELCSA Head Office at the Johannesgemeinde in Pretoria-East and secondly, to situate the current NELCSA Head Office at 570 Witogie Street, Die Wilgers, Pretoria.

Motion 4: To not build the current NELCSA Head Office at the Johannesgemeinde in Pretoria-East

Against: 0

Abstain: 3

Carried by majority

Motion 5: To situate the current NELCSA Head Office at 570 Witogie Street, Die Wilgers

Against 0

Abstain 2

Carried by majority

- 5.1.4 The Church Council has decided to move the Nelspruit Congregation from the Northern to the Eastern Circuit. The Nelspruit congregation has agreed. The motivation is that the Nelspruit congregation is located closer to the Eastern Circuit congregation in Piet Retief and can therefore be better served from there. Synod is requested to ratify this decision.

Motion 6: To move the Nelspruit congregation from the Northern to the Eastern Circuit.

Against: 0

Abstain: 6

Carried by majority.

- 5.1.5 Between Synod sessions Church Council must take certain operational and executive decisions, that cannot wait till the next session of Synod. These are then ratified by Synod at the next session. One of these is to deal with the outstanding debt of congregations. Church Council discusses outstanding debt and specific situations in congregations with the congregational councils. Church Council then must decide on repayment arrangements and in some cases offer encouragement by way of "interest holidays" and "write-down".
In the past 2 years two congregations fall into this category: Kempton Park and East Rand (ELCER).

Motion 7: Kempton Park Conditional Write-Down

The current outstanding debt is R 268 871. Church Council seeks to ratify the decision for a conditional write-down of 12.5% [effective 11.1%] of payments made to the outstanding debt and an interest holiday. This would ensure that the congregation should pay off their debt by December 2024 and that they will then hopefully be able to afford a Pastor's Post.

Abstain 3

Against 0

Carried by majority

Motion 8: East Rand (ELCER) Conditional Write-Down

The current outstanding debt is R252 333. Since 2018 NELCSA and the congregation had an arrangement that interest would not be levied on the arrears amount if R 5 000 per month is paid on the account. The congregation honoured this commitment and had the benefit of no interest. The Church Council also encouraged the congregation to sell some of the properties. The Heidelberg property has now been sold for R700 000. Because the congregation's main property and manse are in dire need of some renovation, some of these funds will be utilised towards the renovation project. The congregation requested the Church Council to grant a 20% write down when the current outstanding amount of R252 333 is paid. In light of the congregation having enjoyed an interest holiday since 2018 the Church Council proposed a R40 000 write-down: this equals around 15%. Church Council requests Synod to ratify this decision.

Abstain: 6

Carried by majority

5.2 Motions from Circuits and Congregations

No motions were received from Circuits and Congregations.

5.3 Motions from Church Synod

5.3.1 Changing the description of the recommended offering 'Old Age Home' to 'Senior Residence'.

Motivation:

The term "old" age has a degrading connotation on the residents of such an institution, whereas the term senior residence is more respectful.

Signed by: Maria Sieburg, Karen Meyer, Langa Ndlela, Sonja von Fintel and Naomi Leshabane

Motion 8: Renaming the recommended offering in Church Law 1 from 'Old Age Home' to 'Senior Residence'.

A motion to change the description of the recommended offering from Old Age Home to Senior Residence was received.

Abstain 5

The motion is carried by majority

6 ELECTIONS

Friedeburg Wenhold, as convener of the election committee, explains the election procedure. The election outcomes below are based on a simple majority, unless stated otherwise. The elections where there is only one candidate will also be held by secret ballot.

6.1 a) President of Church Synod

Nominations: Henning Springer

Result: Henning Springer

b) Deputy to the President of Church Synod

Nominations: Bernd Klingenberg, Anna Kaduma-Gumbie, Karsten Hinze, Holger Maul, Bernd Röhrs

A second round of voting takes place because no candidate received the required majority (50% +1). The candidates with the most votes go over to the second round.

Second round: Bernd Klingenberg, Anna Kaduma-Gumbie

Result: Anna Kaduma-Gumbie

Deputy to the Deputy President: Bernd Klingenberg

6.2 a) Secretary to Synod 1 and 2

Two names must be written on the ballot paper.

Nominations: Stella Cockburn and Karsten Hinze

Result: Stella Cockburn and Karsten Hinze

b) Deputy to Secretary 1 and 2 of Church Synod

Nominations: Heidrun Wenhold

Result: Heidrun Wenhold

6.3 a) Treasurer

Nominations: Vernon Filter

Result: Vernon Filter

b) Deputy to the Treasurer

Nominations: Carmen Westermeyer, Maria Sieburg

Result: Carmen Westermeyer

6.4 **Deans****a) Eastern Circuit**

Nominations: Mark Meier,
 Result: Mark Meier
 Nominations for Deputy: Randolph Kassier, Reiner Focke
 Result: Reiner Focke
 Deputy to the Deputy
 Result: Randolph Kassier

b) Southern Circuit

Nominations: Dirk Köstlin
 Result: Dirk Köstlin
 Nominations for Deputy: Manfred Müller-Nedebock, Victor Röhrs
 Result: Victor Röhrs
 Nominations for Deputy to the Deputy: Elke Carrihill
 Result: Elke Carrihill

c) Central Circuit

Nominations: Wilko Hunger, Remo Koehne
 Result: Wilko Hunger
 Nominations for Deputy: Jack Magoro, Remo Koehne
 Result: Remo Koehne
 Deputy to the Deputy
 Result: Jack Magoro

d) Northern Circuit

Nominations: Detlev Tönsing
 Result: Detlev Tönsing
 Nominations for Deputy: Jan Duvenhage
 Result: Jan Duvenhage
 Deputy to the Deputy
 Result: Vacant

6.5 **a) Ordained Member of Church Council**

Nominations: Udo Lütge
 Result: Udo Lütge

b) Deputy to the Ordained Member of Church Council

Nominations: Elke Carrihill, Martin Büttner
 Result: Martin Büttner
 Deputy to the Deputy to the Ordained Member of Church Council:
 Elke Carrihill

6.6 **Lay Member to Northern Circuit Council**

Nominations: Lameck Malele
 Result: Lameck Malele

7. **TOPIC OF SYNOD: “HOPE – Live it” Romans 5 1-5**

The keynote speaker to Synod, Pastor Felix Meylahn, delivers a presentation on the Synod theme.
 (Appendix 2)

8. **PRESENTATIONS**

8.1 The following presentations were given during synod:

- 8.1.1 Ministry and Discipleship (MAD) by Mark Meier
- 8.1.2 Theological Education at the University of Stellenbosch by Pastor Felix Meylahn
 (Appointed by UELCSA as Director of Studies)
- 8.1.3 “Dealing responsibly with Sexuality in the broader context of the Lutheran Theology of Grace and Acceptance” by Retired Bishop Dieter Lilje (Appendix 3)
- 8.1.4 Feedback on the investigation into ‘Church Structures and Ministry Models’, as was ratified by Synod 2021 by Pastor Udo Lütge and the members of the committee who are present.

9. **GENERAL**9.1 **Devotions**

The following devotions were held:

Thursday Evening	Rutendo Gora
Friday Morning	Group Devotion (Synod Planning Team)
Friday evening	Tristan Krüger
Saturday Morning	Petra Röhrs
Saturday Evening	Heino Küsel

9.2 Words of Greeting

9.2.1 The following guests are welcomed during the Synod and addressed the meeting:

Bishop Burgert Brand (ELCIN (GELC); UELCSA);
 Bishop Gilbert Filter, (ELCSA (Cape Church));
 Bishop Zwanini Shabalala (ELCSA Eastern Diocese);
 Bishop Helmut Paul (FELSiSA);
 Rev Sikawu Makubalo (CUC)
 Retired Bishop Horst Müller (NELCSA).
 Pastor Ron Küsel (GSM)

9.2.2 Words of Greeting were received and read from the following ecumenical partners:

Dr Detlev Görrig (DNK-LWB);
 Rev Joe Lüdemann (ELM Hermannsburg),
 Bishop Petra Bosse-Hube (EKD);
 Rev. Marc Reusch (EKD)
 Bishop Martin Frische (ESSA);
 Rev. Anne Burghardt (LWF);
 Rev. Lilana Kasper (LUCSA)

9.3 Word of Greeting from Synod to Congregations

The Word of Greeting by Synod to congregations is presented by the formulating committee and finalised. The Word of Greeting is sent out to all congregations to be read at the first possible Sunday service after Synod.

10. NEXT CHURCH SYNOD MEETING**10.1 2nd Session of the VIII Synod**

Venue: UELC

Date: To be announced

11. CLOSING**11.1 Closing service with Holy Communion and induction of newly elected office bearers**

The church service is held in the Ev. Lutheran Concordia congregation in Augsburg.

The liturgist is Pastor Reiner Focke, and the preacher Bishop Theo Jäckel. (Appendix 4)

The following elected office bearers, who were not inducted into their active position before, are inducted by Bishop Theo Jäckel:

Lay Member of Circuit Council for Northern Circuit	Mr Lameck Malele
Dean, Central Circuit	Pastor Wilko Hunger
Deputy Dean, Central Circuit	Pastor Remo Koehne
Deputy Dean, Northern Circuit	Pastor Jan Duvenhage
Deputy Dean, Southern Circuit	Pastor Victor Röhrs

9.2 The President thanks all who helped in preparing and conducting a successful Synod. A special word of thanks goes to the Augsburg Congregation for the warm welcome received.

Mr Henning Springer
 President of the Synod

Bishop Theo Jäckel
 Chair of the Church Council

Ms Liselotte Knöcklein
 Scribe

First draft sent to delegates 5 December 2023

Second draft incl. input from delegates sent to Church Council 27 June 2024

Final Minutes **16 August 2024**