

# School Pastor Report Hermannsburg School to the NELCSA Synod 2025

I am privileged to present this bi-annual pastoral report to the synod of NELCSA. In this report I will reflect on the main aspects of my activities at the Hermannsburg school.

## 1. Spiritual Life and Worship

### 1.1 Daily Devotions and Chapel

The school pastor continues to root daily life in the rhythms of scripture, prayer, and worship. Morning devotions are held in chapel throughout the week, led by teachers, the chaplain's assistant and myself, as school pastor, and occasionally by senior students. These devotions are an opportunity to pause, reflect, and set the tone for the day ahead, grounding our activities in God's Word.

As a basis for the devotions we have journeyed through the Christian year, marking, amongst others Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Advent as a school community, drawing deeply from the Lutheran tradition.

### 1.2 Faith Formation and Religious Instruction

Religious Education continues on a weekly basis from grades 6 to 10 every Thursday. Lessons are designed not only to teach biblical knowledge, but also to invite students to wrestle with deep questions of faith, morality, and purpose. In addition, confirmation classes for our Grade 8-12 learners provide a structured path toward affirming their baptismal promises. This year, we will celebrate the confirmation of 8 scholars, which promises to be a joyous occasion for families and for the congregation.

## 2. Pastoral Care and Counselling

Pastoral care is an integral part of my ministry at Hermannsburg School. The emotional and spiritual well-being of our students is attended to in both formal and informal ways. Personal counselling sessions take place regularly, with students seeking guidance on matters of faith, relationships, loss, and anxiety. The concept of the "ministry of Presence" remains crucial for my work here at the school — especially as young people navigate the challenges of adolescence and a rapidly changing world.

One way that I have been able to connect more deeply with our scholars over the last two years, was to accompany them on their German Exchange Programme. Being with the scholars on local excursions as well as flying with them to Germany has offered many opportunities to talk about faith and our Christian roots. A memorable occasion was a prayer and long discussion in the Ulmer Munster (Cathedral) in the city of Ulm. This laid a foundation for many discussion of faith in our everyday lives and was an exciting opportunity to grow spiritually. It is a privilege to be in the position to spend time with scholars outside of the school environment, being able to connect to them on a very different level.

## 3. Community and Outreach

### 3.1 Service Projects

The Hermannsburg School ethos places a strong emphasis on service. I continue to run the school's Siyabambisana Project, which was birthed during covid, to support our local community and the local creche. On an ad hoc basis I take scholars to shop for the creche and to spend time in the creche with the pre-school children.

### 3.2 Ecumenical and Intercultural Engagement

We give thanks for a spirit of cooperation with other schools in our region. Joint meetings, called UNITY meetings, happen every first and last Monday of each term. We have not been able to attend all of them but strive to get to Pietermaritzburg when our school calendars allow us to do so. Our school has also welcomed visiting scholars from Germany, enriching our understanding of the broader Christian family and our place within it.

## 4. Highlights and Challenges

### 4.1 Highlights

Among the memorable occasions, the School Opening services stand out. Gathered in the local congregational church, students and staff greet the new year with God's word. Other highlights included the Brass Band Festival on 9-11 August 2024, which was hosted by the local congregation but took place on the school premises and supported by some staff. On 10-11 May the school hosted the NELCSA Choir festival in the congregational hall. Both these events cemented the relationship of the Hermannsburg School and the NELCSA, which I am very grateful for. In addition we also had a festive service where the new Executive Head was inducted into her role. I am very grateful for her support in spiritual matters and the direction she has already lead our school in.

I am also grateful for the number of scholars (past and present) attending our Youth Camps in the Winter and Summer holidays as well as the Sunday school camps, which have all been very successful.

#### 4.2 Challenges

The past few years have not been without its challenges. Like many, we have felt the lingering effects of the pandemic—academic pressures, social tensions, and economic hardship for many families. The needs of our boarding students, particularly on an emotional level, remain significant. We have responded by increasing pastoral support through the employment of a chaplain's assistant. She has been invaluable in so many ways, as this directly supports my deep belief in the ministry of presence mentioned above.

Having a ½ post at the school means that I am not always present as the demands from the local congregation and the KZN youth require me to be off campus from time to time as well as my absence during the 3 week Germany visit. It is here where Nonjabulo Shezi, the chaplain's assistant, has been of great support, ensuring that there is always a pastoral presence at the school. I am also in the position where I have take some of my annual leave during term time as the school holidays are often filled with my Youth Pastor Post commitments. This is by no means ideal, but also unavoidable, and for that reason the chaplain's assistant is of crucial support and so I would like to thank her here for her unwavering support.

#### 5. Gratitude

I wish to also express heartfelt gratitude to the staff, school leadership, my local congregation, parents, and volunteers who give so generously of their time and gifts. To the synod, your prayers, oversight, and financial support are deeply appreciated. We are, truly, co-workers in God's vineyard.

May the Lord bless this ministry, and may the Holy Spirit guide Hermannsburg School in all that lies ahead.

Rene Risch  
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Hermannsburg School