

# Youth Pastor Report Southern and Eastern Circuit (KZN Youth) to the NELCSA Synod 2025

*Presented by: Pastor Rene Risch*

*Date: 09 July 2025*

## Introduction

Greetings in Christ's name.

It is my privilege to present the bi-annual report on the activities and developments of the KZN youth ministry under the NELCSA church. This report focuses on the key areas of our ministry, particularly the organization and execution of camps and the ongoing development of our Youth Council.

In the Southern and Eastern circuits of the NELCSA the Congregations maintain and finance a regional youth ministry led by a youth pastor (in a 25% post) and an elected youth council. We are currently in the second year of the three year term of the youth pastor post. In 2026 we will again need to approach the congregations of the Eastern and Southern circuits to see if they wish to continue with the current structure. This structure is based on congregations of these two circuits funding the 25% post as well as an additional 5% of a Pastors post to fund hub activities. (This used to be 25% as the youth pastor previously held a half post but has been systematically reduced over the last few years so as to lighten the financial load on individual congregations. The balance is made up by fundraising efforts of the youth council).

The leadership is responsible for regional youth activities including camps, events, training, planning and administration. The greater region is divided into three hubs (or sub-regions). One of these hubs, Pietermaritzburg, is served by a youth worker/pastor post (please see her report in Addendum 1). In addition to this, congregations work with volunteers that help with the youth ministry in local structures.

## 1. Youth Camps

Camps continue to be a vital part of our youth ministry, serving as spaces for spiritual growth, fellowship, and faith formation among our young people. We have successfully maintained three major camp events over the past years once-off camp.:

### a. Kid's Kailager Winter Camp (Ages 8–12)

a. This camp offers younger children an experience of church fellowship beyond the local congregation. Activities were centred around Bible stories, crafts, music, games, worship and lots of fun on the beach. Attendance of this camp was as follows over the last 2 years:

- i. 2024 – Theme: God's Promises. 22 Helpers and 41 participants (1 Eastern circuit, 9 Central circuit and 31 Southern circuit) (63 in total).
- ii. 2025 – Theme: Rooted in Faith. 18 Helpers and 33 participants (2 Eastern circuit, 9 Central circuit and 22 Southern circuit) (51 in total).

### b. KT Camp (Ages 12–16)

a. This camp caters to our confirmands and teenagers, providing age-appropriate discussions on faith, identity, and community. Sessions were designed to engage youth more deeply with Scripture, and leadership training elements were introduced to encourage excellence in leadership.

- i. 2024 – Theme: Friendships. 8 Helpers and 22 participants (4 Eastern Circuit 18 Southern Circuit) (30 in total)
- ii. 2025 – Theme: Cracking the Code (The Creed). 14 Helpers and 42 participants (3 Eastern circuit, 5 Central circuit and 33 Southern circuit) (56 in total). This is nearly double from the year before.

### c. Rüstwoche (Summer Camp)

a. The Rüstwoche remains the highlight for many on our youth calendar. Open to youth from across the NELCSA church and beyond, it brings together diverse congregations for a week of worship, workshops, bible studies, outdoor activities, and reflection. This camp provides meaningful engagement with the Gospel in a context of joy, openness, and togetherness, as well as being faced with many challenges that our country and youth face today. The camp continues to be a spiritually enriching experience for all who attend, and feedback from

participants has been overwhelmingly positive. There are three parts to this theme: 1. Preparation weekend which has an element of leadership training to it, 2. The camp itself and 3. The outreach, where we try and visit different congregations over the years.

- i. 2023 – Theme: Stronger together. 104 people attended, including adults helping with the kitchen. The average age of participants was 16,40. Outreach in Piet Retief.
- ii. 2024 – Theme: Resilience. 113 people attended, including adults helping with the kitchen. The average age of participants was 16,78. Outreach in New Germany.

## 2. Youth Council

The Youth Council remains a cornerstone of our youth structure. It serves both as a representative body and a leadership body making vital decisions around planning, fundraising and administering finances. The Youth Pastor and council meet once a year face to face for an annual meeting as well as a few times during the year online. There is also regular WhatsApp contact.

The structure is made up as follows:

Executive:	Philip Voigts (Chairman)	Co-opted
	Marlene Hillermann (Treasurer)	Co-opted
	Liesel Muhl (Secretary)	Elected Southern Circuit
	Maika Lilje	Elected Eastern Circuit
Youth Pastor:	René Risch	

Representatives:

Southern Circuit: Fezeka Nzama  
Kumbirai Mujeni  
Fiddi Schroeder

Eastern Circuit:

Tiaan Erasmus  
Brian Nelson  
Philipp Thiele

## 3. Finances

Currently the KZN Youth Ministry is healthy financially. The funds available are used to subsidise camps and to promote regional and local ministries. The healthy reserves will also stand us in good stead going forward. However, more fundraising needs to be done or else our Youth Hub funds are in danger of being depleted in the next 4 years.

## 4. Conclusion

The youth ministry remains active and engaged, with camps and the Youth Council continuing to play a central role in connecting our young members to the life and mission of the church. As we look to the future, we are excited to see more growth in our camps and to find creative ways to fundraise, so that the burden on our congregations is not too high.

I thank all congregations, parents, volunteers, and fellow pastors who support our youth work. Together, we are nurturing the next generation of faithful and committed members of the Body of Christ.

Yours in Christ



René Risch  
Youth Pastor, KZN Youth, NELCSA

## ADDENDUM 1

### Report on youth and young adults' work in Pietermaritzburg by Pastor Petra Roehrs

#### (Pmb/Midlands Hub)

2024 was a busy and eventful year – we experienced God’s blessing and guidance but also had to face some challenges. It remains a privilege to work with young people; to listen to their views and opinions and their testimonies of God’s presence in their lives – and, of course, also to have fun and fellowship together.

**Children’s Church:** It is in the children’s church that we are facing the challenge of small numbers. The attendance varies from Sunday to Sunday and many children attend infrequently. That makes it very difficult to build a relationship with them and teach the Bible stories before they start with confirmation classes. The average attendance for 2024 was 7 children per Sunday. We are still using the Sparkhouse Digital All Kids Program which caters for children of different ages in one group. There were 11 dedicated helpers and 2 students who helped during the holidays. Unfortunately, 4 of our helpers were in matric and won’t be able to help this year– therefore we need a few new helpers! Please consider making yourself available for this rewarding work! I sincerely THANK the children’s church helpers for their enthusiasm, their thorough preparation and the love with which they are involved in this important ministry. The children enjoy children’s church and their contributions are appreciated by the congregation. As we want to focus on young families in our congregation this year, we hope that more children will come to children’s church regularly. Please keep this challenge in your prayers!

**Youth:** We met on most Friday nights with 10-16 youths attending. We had bible studies, games evenings, discussions on various topics, an inspiring talk by one of our young adults, movie evenings, baking workshop, etc. We also prepared a youth service and the youth helped to prepare some crafts for family services as well as palm crosses for the Palm Sunday service. It is wonderful that the youth are also enthusiastic when it comes to reaching out to people beyond our congregation: they made some placemats for the Kairos Prison ministry and Christmas cards and wrapped shoebox presents for the Pre-school Children of Siyabonga Helping Hands for Africa. The youth also handed out care-packages to 10 matriculants. We are privileged in our congregation that so many youth members do readings in our worship services and help at Holy Communion. They also helped at our fundraisers - Easter Evening (Easter Egg Hunt) as well as the Winterfest and Advent Evening. We also had youth members attending our church camps (KT camp and Rüstwoche). It was wonderful to see how enthusiastically the youth attended on Friday nights – even if they had sports early Saturday morning. The trust within the youth group has grown and it is a safe place for teenagers to share their faith, their worries and concerns - also their joys. THANK YOU to all parents who helped with transport – we appreciate it! It is wonderful to see how involved the youth is in the life of the congregation – THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU – we need your input and ideas in order to move into the future!

**Young Adults:** This group of 15-20 young adults met 3 Wednesday evenings per month. It is a very diverse group – from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Germany. The group is made up of students, volunteers, employed and unemployed young adults. Only about 50% of the group are congregation members. We met over dinner or snacks whilst having bible studies, discussions, movie nights, games and social evenings. One of the members shared on her research for her PhD and another about his music career. The discussions were always interesting and challenging – it is a privilege to be able to hear how young adults understand their faith and their role in our society today. Young Adults is meant to be a “home away from home” where people may feel welcome to be themselves, to ask questions, to challenge views and to be challenged. Some Young Adult members are involved in our church services, doing readings and helping with Holy Communion and service helper duties. They were also helping at the Easter and Advent Evenings as well as the Winterfest.

The congregational council has invited a member from the Young Adults group onto council every year so that young people can add the voice of the youth to the discussion and “learn the ropes” so that they might be willing to serve on the council of their congregations in future when they are approached to do so.

It is a joy to accompany children and young people on their journey of faith – we can learn so much from them! This work cannot be done without the help and involvement of the parents and families of these kids and teenagers. Please, dear parents and grandparents: Be an example to your children and help them to grow in faith and commitment! Come to church regularly and bring your children so that they can feel at home in the congregation! Encourage your teenagers to attend youth meetings so that they can find a sense of belonging in the group and in the congregation. We as pastors and congregational council understand that young families are extremely busy and find it difficult to make time for the activities of the congregation. Nevertheless, I want to encourage you to become involved and to guide us concerning your needs and expectations as we want to be a congregation which is inviting and welcoming towards young families.

Youth and Young Adults from our own and other NELCSA congregations (and also from other denominations) can grow in faith and can then be active congregation members wherever they go - making a positive difference.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who supported the children's, youth and young adults' ministries through their prayers, active involvement, suggestions and contributions. I cannot but mention the financial support – the grant from the Youth Hub Fund and the contribution from the Hayfields congregation towards the youth worker – which I am truly grateful for. A special THANK YOU to Victor who is doing this ministry together with me and who puts in a lot of his time and energy – we as pastors are grateful to be able to do this work and receive so many blessings through it!

Please continue to pray for our children, youth and young adults!

Petra Röhrs