



## Concordia-Gerdau Congregation

The Concordia Congregation (also known as the Gerdau congregation) is situated in the district of Coligny, North West.

In 1871, Missionary Heinrich Wilhelm Schulenburg, from Gerdau in the “Lüneburger Heide” Germany, founded the Mission in Ramaliane for the Bamaloka tribe. Together with his grown children he founded a church to give his descendants a German speaking spiritual home. Over the years the congregation grew and they longed to have their own church. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, 1905, a congregation consisting of 18 adults and 21 children was founded. Missionary Schulenburg donated land from the farm Bronkhorstfontein hoping that eventually a church, graveyard, parsonage and school would be erected.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, 1907, a small church was completed and inaugurated. Missionary Wilhelm Schulenburg, son of Heinrich Wilhelm, served the congregation part-time from 1905 to 1927. The congregation established itself by growing spiritually as well as in size. Due to the fact that the congregation was very isolated they joined the Hermannsburg German-Evangelical-Lutheran Synod in South Africa. A request for their own minister was directed to the Mission Administration in Germany, via the South African Synod. Missionary Heinrich Voges was sent in 1927 and served the congregation until 1937. He was followed by: Carl Scriba (1937-1942), Otto Rathe (1942-1956), Richard Schlüter (1956-1968), Vikare Töllner und Steinmeier (1968-1969), Bernhard von Scharrel (1970-1990), Vikar Paul Gerhard Achenbach (1990-1991), Johann Hillermann (1991-1994), Theo Jäckel (1995-2003), Hugo Filter (2003-2010), Mark Meier (2010-).

Once the original church became run-down, a replacement was built and inaugurated on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1939. In September 1940 the Riekertsdam and Concordia congregations merged. In the year 1952 the congregation had grown to 240 members, being the highest in its history.

A school, together with a hostel, finally became a reality. This meant that school and religious studies could be taught in German. Unfortunately, after 53 blessed years, the school had to be shut down, due to a lack of children. The school and hostel is now successfully being used as a youth centre, catering for groups of up to 45 participants at a time.

A church hall was built and on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1972 it was inaugurated, with the hope that it would enrich the lives of the congregational members.

A union was officially established between the congregations of Concordia, Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 1981 and in 2003 the Klerksdorp and Potchefstroom congregations merged, due to their small numbers. Concordia and Potchefstroom meet annually for a joint service, alternating between the two venues.

The brass band and choir are an integral part of church life. Twice a month the service is accompanied by the brass band which rehearses regularly on Thursday afternoons. The congregation has had the privilege of hosting two large brass band festivals (1956 and 1988), as well as a number of smaller circuit brass band festivals. The brass band has taken it upon themselves to play for the sick as well as the elderly in Lichtenburg and Coligny's old age homes, during Advent.

The church choir rehearses fortnightly on a Wednesday evening. The choir performs during festive church services and participates in both the circuit and main choir festivals. In 2010 the main choir festival was successfully hosted in Gerdau.

Congregation members, who have reached the age of 70 and above, can expect a visit from the choir on their birthdays. The choir also engages in a carols evening, hosted by the neighbouring reformed churches of Coligny.

In our small congregation we are blessed with two organists who accompany the service twice a month and at every festive church service.

As a result of the union between the congregations, and the fact that our Pastor also has to see to his duty in Potchefstroom, we have four lay readers, who alternatively lead the service once a month.

The women's committee actively participates in various endeavours. They come together once a month for bible study, are responsible for the flowers in church, provide tea and coffee after every church service and are accountable for the hospitality at all general events. The women's committee also organizes an annual fundraising project and they support various outreach projects in the area.

Even though the youth's numbers decrease annually, they still organize a party every year, perform a nativity play and decorate the Christmas tree in the church, serenade at the homes of the congregational members during advent and mount the new watchword for the year in the hall.

The three bible study groups meet regularly.

To accommodate the increasing number of Afrikaans speaking members in the congregation, an Afrikaans service was introduced and takes place once a month. All German sermons are translated into Afrikaans by the pastor, as well as various congregational members.

The collection on Thanksgiving goes towards exterior charity projects. The mission committee supports evangelistic - and crisis projects. The congregation also supports the recycling project.

Annually the congregation slaughters cattle and pigs over a period of two days, processing the meat into mince, sausage and "Mettwurst". In spite of the hard work, old and young voluntarily work together cheerfully.

We praise and thank the Lord for this active congregation.

Our annual contribution to the church council and keeping the harmony between the different languages in our congregation, are our biggest challenges.

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Service times: January – April; September – December 09:30

May – August 10:00

Exception - 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month 08:30