

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Our congregation is the youngest ELCSA (N-T) member in the greater Durban area. We are still a Mission project, as we only became an independent entity in October 2006.

We are, in a way 'unique', because we are still semi-rural and we like the label we are known by: 'The Church on the Hill'. We are located in a very scenic and peaceful area, with well kept grounds and gardens. Our little chapel is also a popular wedding venue.

HISTORY

For many years we were a branch and then part of the Durban congregation, who used to meet at the Dutch Reformed Church in Smith Street and/or in private homes for lay preacher service. When the Durban congregation eventually bought a piece of land to build their own church and Hillcrest had some property donated by a Mrs Gevers to be used as a cemetery, they also took the bold step and decided to also build a chapel. Both, Durban and Hillcrest churches were completed in 1953.

We remained part of the Durban congregation but also had some services in our own chapel, albeit only twice a month. These services were all in German with the result that we became known as the German Church. As the surrounding area started to develop more and more into a residential area, our numbers started growing and we decided gradually to bring in some changes.

CHANGES

We started by having a service every week and alternated languages in order to accommodate non German speakers.

A little hall was built to facilitate the children's church and to gather for tea and fellowship after the service. The former used to be held outside or in inclement weather in the 'tool room'. For tea and fellowship we used to go to private homes in the close proximity to the church!



Gradually attendance grew and English services became more contemporary. German services, however, still remained traditional. In this way we tried to accommodate all tastes and preferences.

The biggest change, however, was becoming independent of the Durban congregation.

It was a bold step, taken after many deliberations and earnest prayer. In October 2006 we started out with 104 foundation members and our numbers now stand at 146. We now have an English service every



Sunday and on two Sundays a month we offer a German service after the English one.

Our average attendance has risen most pleasingly!

We have started making use of technology e.g. with music, power point etc., and have invested in some television screens in the Mothers' room so that the mothers with young babies can be part of the entire service while they tend their little ones. The mothers' room is a delight and an encouragement for young mothers to bring their babies to church.

Our children's ministry has grown, thanks to a strong core of young adults who have become actively involved.

There are numerous groups meeting at church or in homes for Bible Study, and, with the help of the Kingfisher Movement, also some prayer groups who carry the spiritual welfare of the congregation in prayer.

On the aesthetic and ecological side, we have consciously removed all the alien trees on the property and replaced them with indigenous ones to do our bit for God's creation! This has added to the beauty of our grounds, making our cemetery a really restful place for our loved ones.

CHALLENGES

Challenges are always present in any congregation and we need to be motivated and not become discouraged by them. We need to remain a relevant church in these changing times. With the help of the Kingfisher Movement, we hope to run workshops to discover what our individual talents are and then to learn how to apply them in the greater church life in the area. We need to obey the calling to become and make disciples. We need to dare to reach out our hands into the darkness and to pull other hands into the light!

There are financial challenges that are experienced by all small congregations and we must not stop praying that we will be able to find ways to meet these challenges successfully and with confidence.

We need to attract more people from the immediate surrounds through interesting church related activities, and perhaps also interact more with the ELCSA churches in the Kwa Nyuswa Valley.

Our main challenge this year is to focus on the young adults. They and their children are the future of the Christian church in our area. So far, they have been very successful in helping new members find their niche among us.

At times the challenges seem a bit overwhelming but there is a great saying: "The task ahead of us is never as great as the Power behind us." May we be encouraged by these words and put our trust in God!

