

Evangelical Lutheran Peter-Paul Congregation in Hermannsburg



This is where it all started in 1854 - the missionaries from Hermannsburg in Germany bought the farm Perseverance, built their first home - which can still be viewed as part of Hermannsburg's Mission exhibition - their first church, their first school, their first everything.

Much has changed since, as you can well imagine. From its humble beginnings with worship services being conducted in their home, to creating a building that could be used for the purposes of school and church, the time eventually came to erect a beautiful sandstone building "up the hill" - with big steeple and all. Unfortunately, massive rains were not too kind to this building project, which caused the steeple to collapse. Since then the church-building has a smaller steeple and a separate belfry. Both contribute to the special "flavour" of Hermannsburg, as evidenced by the attached pictures. The steeple has its own rooster, which has been a rather lively bird over the years - only two years ago a storm helped it to fly yet once again, the

success always being the same: The bird in thousand pieces - the pieces gathered and puzzled together to re-create a new one! Previous generations knew about the image of the rooster - much has changed since: When the new rooster was positioned on the belfry last year - this time using a crane and not the acrobatics of some courageous men - a pupil "down at the school" looked out of the window and cried: "Look, they are putting the chicken back!"

But it's not only the steeple and rooster that broke in the life of this congregation. As a missionary church and congregation it was only normal for the Hermannsburg community to work and worship together - Germans and Zulus. This interaction of different cultures must have been a challenging one, but the Gospel's call to unity was stronger than the lure to "divide and rule." Unfortunately, these good beginnings were not sustained; as the South African society became progressively more segregated, so did the Hermannsburg congregation. Eventually the German community built a church-building for the Zulu congregation, who resisted this move both by complaining to the Mission Board and by refusing to help with the building project. Since 1927 there are thus 2 Lutheran congregations in Hermannsburg, their two church-buildings in walking distance. To this day the quaint grave-yards of the Hermannsburg congregation - yes, there are two! - and the church-books testify to a once united congregation. A second major rift occurred in the seventies, when theological and ideological differences within the Peter-Paul-congregation led to one half of the congregation relocating to Greytown, where it eventually joined FELSISA. It is sad to experience, how people who work and play together during the week on a Sunday morning travel past each other in order to attend their respective Lutheran worship services.

Thankfully no rift occurred, when the Peter-Paul-congregation moved away from being a German speaking congregation only - of course, there were the usual ups and downs when

English was introduced as language of worship at first, but since then a good way of living and praying together has grown: English and German are used for worship on alternate Sundays, Church festivals are celebrated in English and German, General Meetings are conducted in English, so are Confirmation classes. Whereas the present arrangement works well in principle, the time has come to revisit and improve on it.

In spite of many activities the focal point of the Peter-Paul-congregation is worship. Apart from



traditional Lutheran services, youth services are conducted in the school's chapel every second week; Holy Communion is celebrated regularly; a special Maundy Thursday service is conducted in our hall, congregants being seated at tables and enjoying singing, supper and Holy Communion; Easter mornings start with Word and brass in the cemetery and a sunrise service in the church, followed by an Easter breakfast; Thanksgiving and Harvest Festivals are usually followed by a meal - last year, a pig-on-the-spit; every now and again we worship at a dam or a home or wherever we get invited to; Confirmations and Golden Confirmations are glorious events, where the congregation offers a splendid party to all who come from far away; the Reformation Service is usually conducted with a major input by the school-children; a welcoming service for those who started High School is a new addition to our variety; on a few occasions we make use of the Taizè-liturgy found in the German hymnal; our Lenten Services are growing constantly with predominantly the young people attending - we are thankful for this colourful picture of worship in our congregation. But its not only about the looks, it's also about sounds: We love to sing. We love to sing accompanied by our organist - we have a beautiful pipe-organ; but we can also sing without. We have a brass-band and are grateful that younger players, who get trained at our school, join us; once a month the brass-band accompanies the worship service. We have a choir, which practises for the "big" occasions in our congregational life, but once a month it will sing during a morning service. We have a small liturgical choir, something really special to Hermannsburg. Our school's chapel band helps us to sing more contemporary songs every now and again. Some musicians on flute, guitar, violin and cello also contribute to the variety of our praise from time to time.

A second focal point for the Peter-Paul-congregation is community life. As we all live rather far apart from each other, we try to organise events to foster fellowship. Meals are on offer rather regularly. The church-bazaar is not intended for fundraising, but for coming together, whilst inviting others to join us. We have a big hall, which allows for parties, worship services, Sunday School events (once a year the Sunday School has a big camp, which ends with a worship service in the hall - parents are encouraged to pick up their children after they have worshipped with them), confirmation celebrations, weddings - and funerals. Funerals are something truly special! They are not merely a family matter. The whole congregation is invited - and many come! - for the service and will stay together for an hour or two after the burial to join for a meal; the bereaved families have often commented on the comfort they were able to draw from this community-support.

A third focal point is the Deutsche Schule Hermannsburg! Congregation and school are often regarded as synonymous entities. They are not. The school is an institution of the church and not of the Peter-Paul-congregation. At the same time school and congregation are interdependent.

Our congregation offers its facilities and membership to the school-community and the school-community supports the congregation in turn with its Boarding Establishments, kitchen, tractor, etc. After a massive storm caused structural damage to the school buildings last year, our congregation was able to support the school with R 100 000,00 - when visitors came to attend the Sangerfest this year, the school provided food, beds and other infrastructure. School and congregation live next to each other - the one cannot see itself without the other. All the members of the school's management team are members of our congregation, and so are many other teachers and learners.

Evangelical Lutheran Peter-Paul Congregation

Email: hmb.congregation@gom.co.za

Tel: 033-4450010

Worship services: 10h00; 1st and 3rd Sunday in German; 2nd and 4th Sunday in English

Youth services: 18h30 in the school's chapel on every 1st and 3rd Sunday

Sunday School: every Sunday, with the exception of Good Friday, Easter and Christmas

Newsletter every second month: C/Kontakt

