

Report by ELCSA (N-T) Church Council to Synod, Kroondal, 15-18 October 2015

Introduction:

"Diversity in Unity" - this is the theme of our Synod in October. Not "Unity in Diversity" The sequence is important. If it is "Unity in Diversity", the foundation on which the Church is built is diversity, which we try to unify. However, "Diversity in Unity" means that the basis is unity, from which diversity grows.

What is the basis of our Unity that binds us all together?

In John 15,16ff we read Jesus saying: "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you may go and bear fruit!"

The basis of our unity, the basis of the Church, is that Christ chose us, and not that I chose Christ! We are Christians by His choice, not by our own!

The root of our unity is not that I chose Christ, but that he chose me, and every Christian in His global Church!

I need to respect His choice, as well as the most basic commandment that HE gave us. We find it in John 15, 12: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you" We cannot and shall not choose to ignore this commandment when it does not suit us.

The watchword of 2015 flows from this: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted us to the glory of Christ!"

If we acknowledge and affirm this foundation of Unity, the diversity will not pull us apart, but can become a creative energy that helps the Church to grow to the glory of the Lord!

In the New Testament there are various passages that point to the diversity in the Church. In Romans 12, 4ff Paul uses the image of a body with many members. A healthy body needs these diverse members to function!

In 1 Peter 4,10 we read: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

This shows another important aspect of the diversity: It is aimed at serving each other and spreading the kingdom of Christ.

All too often the diversity becomes an instrument of competition. We compare and glorify some or belittle others.

Our Church, ELCSA (N-T), has 40 congregations that range from very small to very large, from deep rural to inner city, from German only to English only, with many language combinations in between.

The October-November Bishop's Post used the illustration of a large symphony orchestra. When 100 musicians, highly talented and skilled, tune their instruments to the same pitch, and then hone in on the conductor, the result can be amazing music. "Symphony" originally means an agreement of sound - not the same sound, but different sounds that are "in agreement". If they do not tune their instruments and ignore the conductor, chaos is guaranteed. Here the term "cacophony" is used - sounds jumbled together. Church history has ample examples of both symphony and cacophony.

When the Reformation took off, it spread very quickly due to the symphony of those who

stood together for the new (old!) teachings. However, very quickly, various streams of the reformation resulted in a cacophony that continues to cripple the Church of Christ up to today.

Denominations are not only unavoidable, but also important. The gospel of Christ, and coupled to it the nature of God, surpasses all understanding. No single group or denomination or doctrine can capture its completeness.

Diversity in unity means that we are aware of this, and respect each other, learn from another. This does not mean that we should ignore our doctrines. Rather, the denomination could be compared to the pitch that we tune into. There is no such thing as a "pitchless orchestra". In the same way there is no such thing as a non-denominational Church.

For us as Lutheran Church it means that we do have, apart from the unity in Christ, also the "pitch" of our doctrines to which we tune in.

But it does not end there. To be well tuned is crucial. But that needs to be followed by the music itself, under the direction of the conductor.

"Diversity in Unity" - ELCSA (N-T) is a Church consisting of thousands of individuals, invited by Christ himself into his Church. May we keep our eyes focussed on this Lord, so that the diversity in unity can grow into a symphony of Good news to the World: Christ, our Saviour is reaching out!

1 Personnel News

1.1 Deaths

1.1.1 **Prof. Dr Gunther Wittenberg** passed away on 29 March 2014. He was the pioneer for UELCSA's theological training in Pietermaritzburg and not only did the initial research but also led the process of developing and expanding it. We are grateful for the huge impact that he had within UELCSA, but also far beyond that in theological training within the Lutheran Churches in South Africa and beyond.

1.1.2 Pastor **Albrecht Hahne**, whose early retirement for health reasons had been reported at the previous synod, passed away on 28 April 2015. Before being seconded to the Cape Church, Belville congregation he had served St Peters Pretoria (1987-2001) Bethany (1979-87) and Hermannsburg (1977-79).

1.1.3 During the time of this report pastors widows **Magdalene Böhmer** (31.1.2015), **Anne Holsten** (15.4.2015), **Magret Pape** (20.5.2015) and **Myriam Müller** (27.5.2015) passed away. These women, each in their own way, played an important role in the Church - not only in supporting their husband, but also in the many tasks that were in those times expected of the pastor's wife.

1.1.4 We also need to mention the passing of **Lotte Engblom** who passed away on 26.2.2014. Together with her husband Austin, she had been caring for our theological students at our Church's training centre in Pietermaritzburg from 1979 to 1990 and was a second "mother" to many of our locally trained pastors.

1.1.5 On 18 June 2015 **Bishop em. Richard Schiele** passed away, aged 84. Having grown up on a mission station in Swaziland, he became a missionary, trained by the Berlin Mission society. After serving various ELCSA parishes, he was the

founder bishop of the ELCSA Eastern Diocese (mainly in Swaziland). After his retirement he was very active in Pietermaritzburg in both ELCSA and ELCSA(N-T) congregations and was a real bridge builder between cultures and churches. The last years the couple were active members of the Kempton Park congregation.	84 85 86 87 88	forward, and may he continue to be a blessing.	128
1.2 Leave of absence/Retirements/Ending service in ELCSA (N-T)	89	1.3 Return to Germany	129
1.2.1 On 31 March 2015 Bishop emeritus Pastor Dieter Lilje retired. After his ordination on 11.5.1980 he served Piet Retief (-1984), Pietermaritzburg (-1991) and then 18 years as bishop of ELCSA (N-T) (1991-2009), before he served Nelspruit (2010-2015). As Church leader he guided the Church through the turbulent times from the old to the new South Africa, represented us abroad and locally, and guided many congregations and pastors through challenging times. We thank God for the wonderful work that Dieter and Senta could do in our Church and beyond. The couple is now living in Pretoria.	90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97	During the time of this report no pastors returned to Germany.	130
1.2.2 Pastor Dr Lutz Ackermann resigned from serving ELCSA (N-T) as pastor to the Church of Peace/Friedenskirche, Johannesburg, with effect from 31 January 2015. He returns to Polokwane into the ministry of the Anglican Church.	98 99 100	1.4 New Pastors in our Church	131
1.2.3 Reinhold Schiele was elected as pastor of the Northern Congregations of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia. He commenced his duties there in January 2015, after completing a six year exchange programme in Ruhland, Germany.	101 102 103 104	1.4.1 Pastor Rüdiger Lutz , previously from East London, was elected by the Vryheid congregation and commenced his service there on 1 March 2015, seconded by the ELCSA (Cape).	132 133 134
1.2.4 Pastor Gilbert Filter commenced his post as bishop of the ELCSA (Cape) Church on 1 January 2014. After his ordination in 1991 he served the congregations of Moorleigh and Winterton till 1998, and then moved to Durban Lutherkirche/St Pauls/Hillcrest. With the founding of Hillcrest as an independent congregation he became the pastor there in 2006. Apart from that he was for a while Chairman of the Mission Committee and Deputy Dean of the Southern Circuit, until he became Dean in 2007.	105 106 107 108 109 110 111	1.4.2 Pastor Frank Schütte commenced his time as pastor-coll in Augsburg on 1 September 2014, after passing his second theological examination in August 2014.	135 136 137
1.2.5 Pastor Burgert Brand relocated from Hermannsburg to Namibia as Pastor in Windhoek and Bishop of the ELCIN (GELC) as from 1 January 2015. He came to ELCSA (N-T) from Namibia in 1995 to pastor the newly established Midrand congregation, and pioneered the first phase of development. During this time he also served as Dean of the Central Circuit, till his re-location to Hermannsburg as School and Congregation pastor in 2002. Since 2009 Pastor Brand was also the deputy to the bishop and thus served in Church Council again.	112 113 114 115 116 117 118	1.5 Pastors helping out	138
1.2.6 Pastor Anja Spiske was elected by the Port Elisabeth Congregation of the Cape Church. She will commence her duties there in November 2015.	119 120	1.5.1 Again we are very grateful for retired pastors that are willing to help out during times of vacancies. Pastor em. Werner Harms helped out in Hillcrest for the whole of 2014. Pastor em. Georg Scriba has been assisting in the Eastern Cape.	139 140 141
1.2.7 Pastor Georg Meyer was granted leave of absence to be part of a study process in Germany for at least a year as from April 2015.	121 122	1.5.2 Pastor Dr Gertrud Tönsing is currently assisting the Durban Evangelical Lutheran Parish on a 40% post till the end of 2015.	142 143
1.2.8 Pastor Kees Appelo requested an extension of his leave of absence for a further three years, till 2018.	123 124	1.6 Re-locations	144
1.2.9 Ulrich Johl resigned as Programme Facilitator of ELCSA (N-T) at the end of January 2015. We thank him for his involvement and dedication to the Church and the work of the Church. May God bless him and his family on the way	125 126 127	Numerous re-locations happened in the last two years:	145
		1.6.1 Pastors Victor and Petra Röhrs relocated from Kroondal to Pietermaritzburg in January 2014.	146 147
		1.6.2 Dean Theo Jaeckel relocated from Augsburg to Kroondal, also in January 2014.	148
		1.6.3 Pastor Dr. Reiner Focke relocated from Harburg to Trinity Zululand in January 2015.	149 150
		1.6.4 Pastor Dirk Köstlin relocated from Vryheid to Bethany in February 2015	151
		1.6.5 Pastor Manfred Müller-Nedebock relocated from Bethany to Hillcrest in February 2015.	152 153
		1.6.6 Pastor René Risch relocated from St Peters Pretoria to Hermannsburg School and Congregation in January 2015.	154 155
		1.6.7 Pastor-Coll Rolf Schmidt relocated from Trinity Zululand to Harburg in January 2015.	156 157
		1.6.8 Pastor Udo Lütge was elected by Wartburg congregation and inducted there on 16 March 2014, after the ending of his coll-time. The KZN congregations have also decided to continue with the 25% post of Youth Pastor KZN, currently linked with the 75% post of Udo Lütge in Wartburg.	158 159 160 161
		1.7 Other personnel news	162
		1.7.1 After the transfer of Dirk Köstlin to Bethany, Hugo Filter became Dean of the Eastern Circuit.	163 164
		1.7.2 Congratulations to Pastor Olaf Gieseke and Ms Tintswalo Khoza on their marriage.	165 166

1.8	Extension of service in a congregation	167
	Since Synod 2013 no requests for extension of service of a pastor beyond twelve years was received.	168 169
1.9	Students of Theology	170
1.9.1	One student, Mzi Mabaso, registered as student of UELCSA. Due to his matric exemption not being accepted at UKZN, he commenced with the BTh together with ELCSA Students through TEEC.	171 172 173
1.9.2	We are very grateful that ELCSA (Western Diocese) agreed to let Dr Volker Keding take a large portion of the tutoring of the 5th year students . The ELM sponsored his travel costs. But, most of all, Dr Keding gave a huge portion of his time and energy into teaching the students. Thank you for that! Altogether three students completed the 5 th year.	174 175 176 177 178
1.9.3	Martha Weich has started her internship in Strand Street with Pastor Walter Schwär.	179 180
1.9.4	Matome Sadiki , once successfully completing his written assignments, will commence his internship in Stelle in the Hannoverian Church. Matome, in the mean time, got married to Christina Raabe. May God bless their marriage!	181 182 183
1.9.5	Martin Büttner has commenced his internship in Dessau the Church of Anhalt. We are grateful that these regional churches were willing to accept our interns for a full internship. After the experience that we had with Frank Schütte, who was the first one to participate in a full internship course in Germany, we realised that this is an ideal training situation. Up to now the interns only went for a year, either arriving halfway into the training, or departing halfway through.	184 185 186 187 188 189 190
1.9.6	The regional Church of Saxony has also invited Frank Schütte to a follow up training, and was willing to carry the bulk of the costs.	191 192
1.9.7	We congratulate Anneliese (Menne) Hofmann on her marriage to Malte Hofmann. She continues her studies in Germany. We are very grateful to the Regional Church of Schaumburg-Lippe, that “adopted” her as a student for the time of her studies.	193 194 195 196
1.9.8	Jan Duvenhage , who studies theology part-time, was asked by the Polokwane/Duiwelskloof congregation to assist them as spiritual leader. He stems from the Dutch Reformed Church, and is working towards ordination in the Lutheran Church.	197 198 199 200
1.9.9	Pastor Rosalie Madika is a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where she served as pastor in the Lutheran Church. With the help of LUCSA (Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa) we were able to re-unite the family. Her husband, a veterinary doctor, and four daughters are now all together again. She is a trained and ordained pastor, but we have agreed that she should do an internship, which she does in the Midrand congregation. This is to help her getting used to work in English (French being her language of training) and accustomed to our Church.	201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208
1.9.10	Heidrun Tobler has discontinued her training and is now living in Germany.	209

1.10	Lay Preachers	210
	During 2015 two Lay Preacher Conventions were planned, but unfortunately one had to be cancelled. After the first two rounds of conventions were well attended, the last one only had very few participants.	211 212 213
	Since the purpose of these conventions is to recognise and encourage inducted lay preachers, these conventions should continue on a bi-annual basis.	214 215
	More and more of our congregations make use of lay preachers, and we are grateful for all those who are willing to serve in this capacity. Also the acceptance of lay preachers administering communion is growing.	216 217 218
	Lay preachers are nominated by the congregational councils, and are approved on recommendation by both congregational council and lay preacher trainers. The term of office is four years, and can only be extended on request of congregational council.	219 220 221
2	Congregations	222
2.1	Vacancies	223
	At the time of writing this report, the following congregations are vacant or becoming vacant soon:	224 225
2.1.1	St Peters Pretoria has a vacancy in its second post. At it’s special general meeting on 13 October 2015 it was decided to temporarily reduce the post to a half post, due to financial constraints. The meeting subsequently elected Rev Dr Detlev Tönsing into this post, to commence duties on 1 January 2015.	226 227 228 229
2.1.2	Verden/Dundee (half post) is still vacant, and is served by Pastor Rüdiger Lutz from Vryheid.	230 231
2.1.3	Nelspruit (half post) became vacant with the retirement of Pastor Dieter Lilje. Various lay preachers and pastors from the Northern Circuit have been helping out. Pastor Bernd Jacobs , a semi-retired former ELM co-worker, who was in Barberton for many years in the 1980’s offered to help out for seven months. Due to difficulties in obtaining a work permit, his arrival had to be postponed.	232 233 234 235 236
2.1.4	Polokwane and Duiwelskloof decided not to close after the ending of the Northern Parish . They are embarking on a new journey together with Jan Duvenhage (1.9.8) to see whether they can grow their congregations.	237 238 239
2.1.5	Louis Trichard and Naboomspruit closed in March 2015.	240
2.1.6	Durban Parish became vacant with the departure of Georg Meyer to Germany. Although a strategy had been drawn up to become fully self sustaining by 2023, the finances are at the moment insufficient to carry a pastor, even with substantial help from Mission Committee. They are currently being served by Pastor Dr G Tönsing on a 40% basis.	241 242 243 244 245
2.1.7	Friedenskirche/Church of Peace Hillbrow became vacant after the departure of Lutz Ackermann. This congregation too finds itself in a position where it cannot raise the 50% portion of a pastor’s post that is not covered by the Mission fund, especially since this is to be reduced annually over 10 years.	246 247 248 249
2.1.8	Piet Retief is becoming vacant in November, when Pastor Anja Spiske relocates to Port Elisabeth. We are in a process of applying for a Visa for Vikar Gregor Claus from the Regional Church of Saxony, who is released from his Church for a year to work in South Africa. He has completed his training, and the regional	250 251 252 253

Church of Saxony will request us to ordain him on their behalf when he has stared.	254 255
2.2 Jubilees	256
2.2.1 St Peters Pretoria celebrated its 125 th Jubilee in 2014 as well as the 50 th year of their current Church building in 2015.	257 258
2.3 Visitations	259
The following congregations received a visitation since October 2013:	260
2.3.1 Northern Circuit: Johannesgemeinde Pretoria;	261
2.3.2 Central Circuit: Kempton Park and Thomas Gemeinde Northrand.	262
2.3.3 Eastern Circuit: Braunschweig and Verden-Dundee	263
2.3.4 Southern Circuit: KZN Youth Post, Pietermaritzbrug and New Germany	264
2.4 Project Northrand: In cooperation with the EKD, and via ELCSA (N-T), the congregation established a post for outreach amongst the German Community in Johannesburg. Pastor Katrin Zürn-Steffens is filling that post. It is financed at 80% by the EKD and 20% by the congregation, for a period of three years from October 2014 to September 2017.	265 266 267 268 269
3 Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa	270
3.1 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape)	271
After our last synod it was decided that a task team should lead further negotiations between us and the Cape Church. In November 2014 the task team made the following proposal to the respective Church Councils:	272 273 274
Road Map	275
1. Synods 2015 need to be presented with all relevant information so that synods can decide on merger agree on a date. Information is needed on	276 277
Strategy (bishops)	278
Finances (treasurers)	279
Legal issues (Presidents)	280
2. The task team proposes to each Church Council that 2017 be the target date that we work towards. Synods 2015 can decide to opt for a different date.	281 282
3. The preparation for synods 2015 needs to be such that a 2017 date is possible. Since Cape Synod is in May, the documentation needs to be ready by March.	283 284
4. At both 2015 synods the whole task team should be present. (Cape Church 29-31 May 2015 King Williams Town , NT 15-18 October, Kroondal)	285 286
5.If 2017 is set as target date, the 2017 Synods of both Churches need to meet simultaneously at a common venue. A combined meeting discusses the merger, separate sessions then need to dissolve each Church, followed by a combined founding synod, which also elects the new Church council.	287 288 289 290 291
At it's Synod in May 2015 in King-Williams Town the Cape Church, after intensive discussion, adopted the following proposal:	292 293
"We agree in principle to a merger based on a common underlying Christian calling and tradition.	294 295
Synod tasks Church Council to draw up a draft constitution and orders to be agreed upon in 2016 by the Church Councils of the ELCSA Cape and ELCSA (N-T).	296 297 298

From 2016 to the 2017 synod, Church Council is to consult widely with the congregations on the principles and constitution. Synods of both Churches, in 2017 to vote on the principles.	299 300 301
In 2019 the Churches are to agree on a final constitution and orders, leading to respective dissolution processes."	302 303
A corresponding motion is now put to our synod for discussion and decision.	304
3.2 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (German Ev.Luth. Church)	305
3.2.1 On 18 January 2015 Pastor Burgert Brand was inducted as Bishop in Windhoek by Bishop Horst Müller as chairman of UELCSA Church Council, assisted by the Bishops from the Namibian sister Churches and Bishop Filter of the Cape Church.	306 307 308 309
3.2.2 The Synod of ELCIN (GELC) took place from 17 to 20 September in Windhoek.	310 311
3.3 United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (UELCSA)	312
Two issues were the main focal point during the last two years: the training of Students in the 5 th year, reported on earlier(1.9.2 ff), and the combined theological training with ELCSA in Pietermaritzburg through SALTTT (Southern African Lutheran Theological Training Trust). This will be covered under 6.1	313 314 315 316
3.4 Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA)	317
The general Assembly of ELCSA in February 2015 elected Bishop MM Dithhale as presiding bishop and Bishop AM Mnisi as his deputy. There is a good working relationship between Bishop Müller and Bishop Dithhale. This made it possible to work together in the time of the financial crisis of ELCSA, consulting each other and deliberating on how to best deal with situations that affect both Churches. Some newspapers reported on this crisis in our sister Church ELCSA. In December 2014 all the reserves of its Head Office were invested into an organisation which has not delivered on its promises. As a result, ELCSA head office is without any reserves, which impacts heavily on all areas that were funded by the investment returns. This includes the Theological Training in Pietermaritzburg and the Lutheran Conference Centre in Bonaero Park. In both instances it has a direct impact on us, since we are partners in these. The full implications are yet unclear. Hopefully we will be able to report more at synod in October.	318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330
We wish the Church Council of ELCSA all the wisdom they need to act in this very difficult time, so that they can steer the ship through this storm. May the Lord of the Church help and strengthen them.	331 332 333
3.5 Lutheran Communion of Southern Africa (LUCSA)	334
The Lutheran Communion of Southern Africa serves 15 Lutheran Churches in ten countries from Zambia to the South. In March 2014 Bishop emeritus Dr David Tswaedi from the Lutheran Church in South Africa (LCSA) was appointed as Executive Director.	335 336 337 338
LUCSA, apart from it's two focal areas of HIV-Aids and Malaria Programmes, has also, over the years, published a series of handbooks for confirmation class, Youth work and congregational work that are helpful tools for the Churches in Southern Africa.	339 340 341 342

3.6	Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod in South Africa (FELSISA)	343			
	Due to our focus on the talks between Cape Church and ELCSA (N-T) talks with FELSISA only took place between the two bishops, although FELSISA had requested another meeting of the Church Councils. We hope that this will happen soon. We are pleased to see some good projects being done together, especially by the congregations in the eastern circuit. May this relationship continue to grow closer!	344 345 346 347 348			388 389
4	Overseas partners	349			
4.1	Vereinigte Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche in Deutschland (VELKD)	350			
	After many years of service OKRin Inken Wöhlbrand took up a position in her home church. We are grateful for the good co-operation and interaction with her. Her successor, Dr Christine Keim, assumed her post at the end of last year. We hope to be able to have her visit our Church in the near future, and are looking forward to a continued good working relationship with this important international partner of ours.	351 352 353 354 355 356			
4.2	Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland	357			
4.2.1	At the EKD Partner consultation with the “Southern partners” (Southern Africa and Southern America) in March 2014 various issues were discussed. Perhaps the most important one is the confusion at the EKD between individual congregations (Auslandsgemeinden) staffed by the EKD, and Partner Churches, who get seconded pastors from the EKD. All parties regard the relationship with regional Churches and Mission Societies in Germany as very important. The EKD plays an important role as intermediary and facilitator for finding and seconding pastors from regional churches into partner churches, as well as exchange of interns and assistance with study leave.	358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366			
4.2.2	In the case of secondments of pastors the EKD assists in carrying ongoing costs in Germany.	367 368			
4.2.3	We have again received a grant of 85 000€ (2014) and 83 000€ (2015) which is a huge financial help, directly reducing the financial burden on congregations.	369 370			
4.2.4	Study process “The German Churches in Colonial Southern Africa”. The second volume, covering the period between 1923 and 1983 was launched in June in South Africa. At that stage only the version printed in Germany was available, but the South African edition is expected soon. This time the book is published bilingually. The articles are not translated, but published in the language of writing - either German or English, with a short summary in the other language. This was to reduce costs. At the book launch it became clear that the second volume ends at a decisive point in our history. Since then (1983) huge changes have happened in South Africa and globally. South Africa has entered a new political dispensation where all citizens have the right to vote. Most Churches are much more ecumenically involved. Our own Church has changed from an almost exclusively German Church to a very diverse Church which in many instances reaches out to the immediate community, and no longer only to German speakers. This became apparent during the panel discussions, where the historians were dealing with the issues pre-1983, whilst the church leaders spoke about the current challenges that we are facing. It is also clear that many of these challenges cannot be tackled by each church	371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387			
				on its own, not even by all Lutherans working together, but that strong ecumenical relationships need to be built to deal with them.	390
4.3	Regional Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony	390			
	After hosting Frank Schütte as intern, we hope that we too will be able to host an intern from that regional Church here in South Africa. (2.1.8)	391 392			
	The new visa regulations are currently causing a lot of problems to obtain work permits, even for short term exchanges. We hope that pressure on the Department of Home affairs to rethink some of the problematic regulations will have a positive outcome! Meanwhile we have to try our best to make such exchange programmes possible. We are grateful to the Saxonian Church for its willingness to interact with us, and also carry many of the financial loads of the exchange.	393 394 395 396 397 398			
4.4	Anhaltische Evangelische Kirche	399			
	The good relationship with this regional Church has resulted in it hosting one of our UELCSA interns for a full internship. (1.9.5) We trust that this relationship will continue to flourish.	400 401 402			
4.5	Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionswerk (Hermannsburg) (ELM).	403			
	Rev Michael Thiel has been appointed as the new mission director. His first assignment before commencing office was to do an intensive English course together with his wife. This was done in Johannesburg. As a result we could interact with him on an informal basis before he started his work. This formed the basis for a very good working relationship with him. Meanwhile, the secretary for Africa, Rev Christian Lehmann, could not continue his work due to health reasons. Furthermore, the regional representative, Rev Gunnar Bösemann, returned to Germany at the end of 2014. Rev Joe Lüdemann was appointed as his successor and recently inducted into this post. Bishop Müller assisted at his induction into this office on 3 October 2015. We wish him strength for this work, and trust that the good working relationship will continue and grow.	404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415			
5	Other Church bodies in Southern Africa	416			
5.1	Evangelische Stadtmission im Südlichen Afrika (ESSA)	417			
	The good relationship continues. We are inviting each other to our respective synods and attend where possible.	418 419			
5.2	Dutch Reformed Church.	420			
	There have been no new developments since the last synod. Bishop Gilbert Filter attended the “Algemene Sinode” in 2014, and Bishop Müller the recent one, held beginning of October in Pretoria. Many of the topics discussed are similar in both Churches. We also continue to use their guidelines for minimum salaries for pastors as the basis of our salary scale.	421 422 423 424 425			
5.3	Church Unity Commission	426			
	Here too there is no new development to report on. Our Church continues with its observer status. It was good to have the General Secretary, Keith Griffiths, attending our previous synod in Piet Retief.	427 428 429			
5.4	South African Council of Churches (SACC)	430			
	At the previous synod the crisis in the SACC was reported on. For quite a while the	431			

head office of the SACC was completely without staff, even without a general secretary, after the retrenchment of Rev Mautji Pataki. This resulted in, amongst others, no membership fees being collected for two years.	432 433 434		
Currently Bishop Malusi Mpulwana is the General Secretary, and it seems as if communication is starting again. Bishop Z Siwa of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa is the current president.	435 436 437		
5.5 National Church Leaders Consultation	438		
After various challenges faced by the Church Community, this forum started meeting again, with its next meeting after our Synod in October. The topic of that meeting can best be summed up as “Addressing fundamental challenges that hinder our dreams for a new South African society.” This role previously was played by the SACC, but with its crisis, the NCLC can play an important role bringing Churches together on important South African issues.	439 440 441 442 443 444		
6 Challenges facing our Church	445		
6.1 Theological Training.	446		
6.1.1 An evaluation of our Theological Training Programme in Pietermaritzburg was conducted in February 2014. The findings could be summed up in the following statement: The students coming to the Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI) have much potential and a positive attitude. The work done at LTI, however, does not develop this potential.	447 448 449 450 451		
The evaluation, on the positive side, highlighted the good infrastructure and physical placement of the LTI. But it also listed a significant number of shortcomings, especially in view of the diploma programme and the part done through the Theological Training by Extension College (TEEC). It pointed to challenges iro administration and catering.	452 453 454 455 456		
As a result, SALTTT decided to embark on a turn around strategy, since all parties agreed that theological education is of paramount importance.	457 458		
Bishops Dithale and Müller met with delegates from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the major sponsor of our training programme, to request assistance in this regard. This was in May 2015	459 460 461		
6.1.2 Before steps for a turn around strategy could be implemented, the financial crisis of ELCSA (3.4) resulted in SALTTT being without any finances. ELCSA is the main client at LTI, and had not been able to pay its bills since the beginning of 2015. As a result all SALTTT employed staff had to be retrenched at the end of August 2015. As from 1 September the administration of SALTTT is handled by ELCSA Property Management Company (PMC). Since the situation of the major client is as yet not resolved, SALTTT is working on a month-to-month budgeting and decision making process. All students enrolled at UKZN are continuing with their studies. The current situation affects the catering side of their accommodation, but not the accommodation itself. The staff of LTI seconded to, or employed through UKZN, will also continue their commitment to UKZN for the remainder of this year. This means that Dr Detlev Tönsing continues as lecturer for the time being.	462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474		
The LTI Library is also continuing its services for the time being.	475		
6.1.3 Bishops Müller, Dithale and Mr B Zulu met with lawyers to consult on best options to curtail damage. However, the most crucial issue regarding the way forward is the financial situation of ELCSA.	476 477 478		
6.1.4 Bishop Filter has been tasked by SALTTT to enter into talks with the University of Stellenbosch, with the prospect of new students from our Church embarking their studies there. He will be requested to report on that at our synod.	479 480 481		
6.1.5 As a result of this situation, Church Council has decided not to table the regular report on theological training. A draft had been prepared by Dr Detlev Tönsing, but due to the rapid changes and huge amount of uncertainty we felt that it was crucial to limit the reporting to the current, immediate situation.	482 483 484 485		
6.1.6 By the time of synod the next SALTTT meeting planned for 6 October 2015 should have happened, and we hope to be able to report on the decisions taken there.	486 487 488		
6.1.7 After the election of Rev Dr Detlev Tönsing as pastor to St Peters Pretoria, he tendered his resignation as lecturer seconded to UKZN, with effect 31 December 2015.	489 490 491		
We thank the Tönsings for their commitment and dedication to the Lutheran Theological Institute. Detlev served as principal and deputy principal, and Gertrud as tutor and chaplain. It was a time of good developments, and also of many crises that had to be dealt with. Gertrud has accepted a post-doctoral position at Unisa, and the family will relocate to Pretoria at the end of this year.	492 493 494 495 496		
6.2 Lack of new students training for the ministry	497		
6.2.1 It is not clear to what extent the crisis in Pietermaritzburg has contributed to a drastic decline, or more precisely, lack of new students enrolling for theological training.	498 499 500		
6.2.2 A UELCSA Think Tank in December 2013 defined what is needed for someone to study theology, and also the role that the Church must play in accompanying students during their studies.	501 502 503		
6.2.3 With Stellenbosch now being identified as the institution where our students are encouraged to enroll, Rev Felix Meylahn has been requested to accompany these students.	504 505 506		
6.2.4 A new bursary arrangement needs to be drawn up by UELCSA, since our current arrangement for fee reductions with UKZN does not apply.	507 508		
6.2.5 Perhaps most significantly, all new students will be seen as students of UELCSA right from the start, and not only after the completion of their BTh. This includes an accompaniment programme that will be obligatory.	509 510 511		
6.2.6 When someone wants to enrol for theological studies, the first step is to contact one’s pastor. Then there is an interview with one’s bishop. Furthermore we now also request candidates to do a psychometric analysis. This is not a test that can be passed or failed, but an indication as to strengths and weaknesses, so that during the time of studies, a candidate can also work on those areas that otherwise would become a challenge later in ministry.	512 513 514 515 516 517		
6.2.7 What challenges remain? Future pastors of our Church are currently living unidentified in your homes! Indeed, they do not arrive from a different planet,	518 519		

but are our offspring. Is your child, your grandchild, such a future pastor? Or is it perhaps even you? Time and again older people have embarked on this road because they realised their calling! Please take this matter into your prayers! We cannot “produce pastors” - The Lord of the Church needs to call people, whom we then can train.	520 521 522 523 524	7.1.1.6 During the course of his involvement it became clear that for the key areas of the position, namely developing and implementing a training strategy and programme for our Church, a much stronger theological training background is needed. After his resignation, Church Council did not immediately advertise the post again. We continue to regard it as a strategically important position, which needs to be filled by someone with a strong theological background, and equally strong commitment to the Church. Church Council therefore requests Synod to continue with this post beyond the initial period of 5 years, ie beyond 2016.	563 564 565 566 567 568 569 570
6.3 Finances of the Church (See also the Attachments 1-4 to this report)	525	7.2 eQuip	571
The finance report will cover this. It just needs to be mentioned, that, just as many individuals are finding the current situation financially challenging, so do many congregations and pastors.	526 527 528	We are happy to inform that since the last synod two eQuip retreats did take place, both in Hermannsburg, KZN.	572 573
Some feel that the pastor’s salaries are too high, compared to fellow congregants. Others regard them as inadequate compared to other professions with similar training requirements.	529 530 531	7.2.1 The theme in 2013 was “In, but not of” (2013) This retreat focussed on the fact that we as Christians are in this world, but not of this world - what does it mean to be a Christian, to live as a Christian?	574 575 576
For pastors’ families with school going children or students the bulk of the salary is needed for tuition. This is true for most salary earning families, and a real challenge to most.	532 533 534	7.2.2 In 2015 the theme was “eQuip for discipleship”. As it indicates the focus was on helping us as Christians to live out our faith and share it with others.	577 578
To increase the salaries substantially would mean that more congregations cannot raise sufficient funds anymore, resulting in a reduction of pastor’s posts. If the salaries become too low, the result might be more vacancies.	535 536 537	In both cases the retreat had between 20 and 25 participants. The diversity was in all directions. Families with small children attended, as well as seniors in their late 70’s. Rural and City congregations were represented, and at least 5 or 6 different mother tongue speakers.	579 580 581 582
For this reason the Church continues to explore other options, such as part time ministry, where the bulk of a salary is earned outside the Church, and also the empowering of laity - not as cheap labour, but so that congregations that cannot afford a pastor can still be fully functioning.	538 539 540 541	7.2.3 eQuip 2016 has as its theme: "Growing through challenges - eQuipped for 2016!", this retreat will take place from 2 to 7 January 2016 in Red Acres Retreat Centre, Cedara, KZN. How do we deal with challenging times, issues and circumstances? Do we run away? Hide our head in the sand? Withdraw into our comfort zone? Pretend that everything is OK? Old and New Testament as well as history in general has shown how people grow by facing these challenges and dealing with them. 2016 will bring with it many challenges. The purpose of this retreat is to eQuip the participants to deal with them, and hopefully grow through them!	583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591
7 The way forward	542	7.3 Our role as Church in South Africa	592
7.1 Ongoing training	543	As indicated under 4.2.4 society has drastically changed in the last decades. So has the role of the Church, and the challenges it faces. Although in South Africa Church still plays an important role in the lives of many people, there is much less commitment to a particular denomination or tradition. I chose what is most convenient, closest by, to my liking etc. This means that Church has to rethink the way that it approaches people. We need to keep our present members interested, and show them the important role they play. We need to open up to people that “shop around”, regardless of their back ground.	593 594 595 596 597 598 599 600
In 2009 Church council had identified ongoing training on all levels as a crucial focal point for the Church. As a consequence of this the post of Programme Facilitator was created.	544 545 546	But also the role in society at large has changed. More and more schools no longer give space to churches, and some take “secular” to mean “religion-less”. Thus Church has to find new ways to reach out and often negotiate new arrangements.	601 602 603
7.1.1 Programme Facilitator	547	The relationship between Church and state/government is an interesting one. On the one hand government clearly states that it is secular, on the other it hopes to win the	604 605
Mr Ulrich Johl took on that position in September 2011.	548		
7.1.1.1 Since the previous report at Synod 2013 there had been no new strategic interventions in congregations, but he continued accompanying the East Rand Lutheran Church and Durban Evangelical Lutheran Parish.	549 550 551		
7.1.1.2 Two more workshops “God’s Money: Stewardship & Financial Management” were held, and most participants found them very helpful. All finance people and pastors, especially of congregations that are struggling to make ends meet, are encouraged to participate in such a course.	552 553 554 555		
7.1.1.3 Unfortunately, a course planned together with UP, “Managing Cultural Diversity” has, up to now, not materialised. This would be very beneficial, especially for our city congregations.	556 557 558		
7.1.1.4 Mr Johl also was very involved in the co-worker training programme, assisting the leaders with arrangements and advertising.	559 560		
7.1.1.5 Together with Bishop Müller and Dean Edwin Dedekind he planned and executed the first two eQuip retreats in Hermannsburg (see 7.2)	561 562		

support of Church leaders. Christianity, had it not been so divided, would by far be the largest single group in South Africa. Now the division can be utilised by people in power to choose with whom they want to associate, and ignore those they feel uncomfortable with. For that reason bodies like the National Church leaders consultation and the SACC can play important roles, showing that we have something to say, even when the rulers don't want to hear it.

Never in the history of this country have there been more Lutherans in Government - Parliament and Cabinet, ruling Party and opposition, than currently. Let us pray for those Lutherans in these position, that they will have the "Reformation courage" to challenge their own parties, and not only the opposition, to point at the wrongdoings of their own leaders, and not only that of others.

ELCSA (N-T) is a small church, with a substantial portion of its members being white and German. One often gets the impression that we believe that we cannot really make a difference. How wrong we are!

Yes, we are a small church - but there are not many Churches as diverse as ours, reflecting the diversity of our nation. There are not many Churches as language gifted as we are, able to serve people fluently in different languages.

The bulk of our members are middle- or upper-middle class. Many of them have important positions in their communities, companies, work places.

May we too develop the "Reformation courage" that we wish to see in Lutheran leaders.

In two years time we will be celebrating 500 years of Reformation. A young, unknown priest and professor in Wittenberg had the courage not to keep his mouth shut. Not only did he point out what was wrong, but also stated what was right!

Reformation courage does not mean to moan and complain about what bothers us, but to name the things by name, and also to point out to better alternatives, and work towards them.

"As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you" is the watchword for 2016, from Isaiah 66,13

Yes, there are many reasons to cry, to lament. But God does not comfort us, so that we can then find the next reason to cry about. He comforts us so that we can stand up and deal with the issues that give us grief! May we be comforted into service!

Church Council, ELCSA (N-T), October 2015

On a personal note

In October 2009 I was elected as bishop, succeeding Dieter Lilje. I would like to thank everybody that accompanied me through these six years:

To the many fellow Christians, who regularly pray for me, my family and Church leadership - this is our most important support!

To my deputies: Burgert Brand, and then Theo Jaeckel, for their assistance and

willingness to reflect with me on burning issues.
To Church Council for accompanying me, for your patience and also your positive co-operation
To the staff at Head office - Ulrich Johl for the brainstorming and development of ideas that we could do together, Yolanda Kilian for time and again dealing with "bill frustrations" and other financial matters (and paying the salaries on time!), Liselotte Knöcklein for being my personal assistant with commitment, initiative and also lots of patience!
To my wife, Edna, for bearing with me in all the scattered tasks, travels, coming and going, and time and again being willing to host official guests at short time notice.
And most of all, to our Lord, for his patience, love and guidance.

Looking back at these six years, there are wonderful experiences - I think especially of the Church Festivals, and many services that I could participate in and sermons that I could preach in congregations. In this regard I remember a four week stint that started with me preaching in Strand Street, Cape Town, the oldest Church in use in South Africa, then in Johannesburg, Church of peace, our oldest Church in the northern region, and finally in Heeslingen, in the oldest Church in northwestern Germany, built more than a thousand years ago, in 950, as "Mission Church" amidst the Germans.
Then there were interesting and often fruitful meetings and discussions with other Churches and organisations. The relationship with Saxony is growing in a good direction. The talks with the Lutheran Church in Great Britain so far did not yield results. The interaction with the Lutheran Church in Italy might still yield fruits.
As with every leadership position, there were also very difficult challenges. Each vacancy is in a way a crisis - especially when there are not sufficient pastors available, and congregants are angry and feel that they are treated unfairly. In these six years I have learned the significance of the words that Jesus used, when he spoke about the plentiful harvest and the few workers. "Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers" he said. (Mt 9,37f) I always just thought of harvest and workers coming. But I realised that these workers cannot be produced, or recruited or summoned by the Church or the bishop. God needs to call and send. That is wonderful, and at the same time frustrating when he does not call and send according to our vacancies!

I am aware that currently I am the only nominee for the bishop's election at Synod. At the same time I, more than any one else, am aware of my shortcomings and limitations. I sincerely believe that there are others who can fulfil this task better than I do. I agreed to stand again for election, but would not mind if someone else is elected into this office. So, in closing, I would like to include the task of bishop as part of the harvest workers, and urge all of us to pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He will call and send. When He sends, he also gives the strength for the task!

Yours in Christ
Horst Müller (Bishop)

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