

Report of the German Evangelical Old Age Home, Johannesburg, to the Church Synod 2015 of ELCSA(N-T)

The thought to build a German Old Age Home in Johannesburg goes back as far as the 1930's. In 1946, members of the German Women's association and the Evangelical Lutheran congregation, Friedenskirche, in Hillbrow, decided to purchase plots No. 197 and No.198 in Richmond, Johannesburg, with the purpose to build an Old Age Home. The first two seniors were able to move into an old house, cared for by the first matron, Ms Schlotfeld. Slowly but surely, more plots were purchased, houses were renovated, new buildings were erected, and then in 1953, the institution was registered as the "German Evangelical Old Age Home Johannesburg" (GEOAH). Then already, 20 elderly ladies and gentlemen found a home there.

The institution was expanded, thanks to inheritances, income generated through bazaars, cake sales, events, church offerings, etc.

In the 80's, it became evident that the German Women's Association and the Church, Friedenskirche, needed another organisation to assist in the management of the GEOAH. In 1982 the "Order of St. John's" (Johanniterorden) became the third member on the board of directors.

Thanks to donations received from the Order of St. John's, the German Women's association, the Friedenskirche and other donors (Deutsch-Südafrikanische Stiftung der Deutschen Industrie), the Frail Care was extended.

In the 1990's, we recorded a decline of residents in the GEOAH. This resulted in letting parts of our buildings to the neighbouring Milpark Hospital for accommodation for their nursing staff.

Renovations, alterations, improvements of cottages, flats and rooms, modernising of kitchen and laundry, an additional common room, coffee shop Maxi, and employing professional staff, this all contributed to increasing the numbers of residents at the GEOAH to 110, in the year 2000.

For some time now, we once again see numbers of residents at the GEOAH dwindling, especially in our Frail Care section. Reasons being: high monthly costs; people prefer staying in their own homes or with their children, employing private nursing staff. Occasionally we hear that the location, Richmond, is too far from where family members are living. Families then opt for similar institutions close to their homes.

This of course leaves our Frail Care with many openings, resulting in financial losses over the last few years.

Hence, the budget for the new financial year is based on a 60% occupancy of the Frail Care.

From 1.7.2015, we had to decide on a cost increase for accommodation, care and food between 7.5% and 10%. A salary/wage increase of 6% was decided upon.

The directors of the GEOAH embarked on an advertising campaign – by word of mouth, in congregational publications, DEUKOM program booklet, Website, leaflet handouts etc. Mention is also made, that we offer short term care. In July 2015 we recorded 81 people residing in the GEOAH.

Good news is, that generally the cottages, flats and rooms have a 100% occupancy. For the cottages we have a waiting list. We are getting more and more non German speaking residents, and they feel very much at home in the GEOAH.

Since 2001, Michaela Thomas manages the daily affairs of the GEOAH. Matron Tumi Makalima and her colleagues care well for the people in Frail Care, or if needed in cottages, rooms and flats.

At the beginning of 2015 we had 21 full-time employees, 2 half-day employed and 10 people hired in from an agency. Amongst the carers, we have 2 male carers, whose services are appreciated by our residents.

The board of directors consists of the following 13 members: Pastor A. Wernecke, as representative of the Bishop of ELCSA(N-T)- Bishop H Müller, Pastor H. Zürn, H. Köstlin, H.H. Kohlmeyer and U. Schäckermann, as 4 representatives of the Church. Four representatives of the German Women's Association: T. Riester, H. Schwaecke, I. Lemon and A. Petty. Four representatives of the Order of St. John's: K.von Glehn, A. von Eckardstein, C.C.von Flemming und Th. Thormeyer.

The board of directors meets bi-monthly to discuss issues concerning the GEOAH and to also plan events like the annual bazaar, spring day, residents meetings, etc.

We are thankful for the regular events that are taking place: Weekly-Bible Studies, Devotions, Worship Services, events with coffee and cake, film evenings, visits by individuals, especially to people in Frail Care. Invitations by organizations to concerts etc. To all, we herewith express our sincerest gratitude!

We are also thankful for donations received by individuals and institutions, which indeed have helped during financial constraints. Here, we mention: The Olthaver Trust, the Doreen Charitable Trust, The Hans Merensky Trust, the German Retirement Village Trust, the State Lottery, the Lutheran Congregations, the German Women's Association, which recently celebrated its centenary, (helping to finance some individual residents at GEOAH). Thank you also to the Linda Nagel Foundation for their donations in the above matter.

Our hope and wish is, that the German Evangelical Old Age Home Johannesburg will continue to be a place, where German speaking and other language groups meet and enjoy growing old together.

On behalf of the board of directors,

T. Riester (Chairperson)

Johannesburg, 22.August 2015

Translated by: A Wernecke