

09 October 2009

Miktav Alef (Letter 1)

On-Line Newsletter of Cape-Orange Diocese (ELCSA)

Blessed is the one who takes the time to read this newsletter. I hope that this venture will prove to be of benefit to you. Our golden thread today is not to despise/under-estimate small things or actions. The supreme example is the culmination of a humble birth in a stable in Bethlehem which till this moment is transforming lives. Stephen Covey, mastermind behind the 10/90 principle (Google it and be blessed) states that you do have control over 10% of your life and the 90% beyond your control you can negotiate by your *reaction* to what comes your way. Let it be positive and to the glory of our Creator and Sustainer.

Please feel free to contribute to any of the subsections. Our newsletter will be bi-weekly, so take up your fingers and start typing ... and remember – it's OUR newsletter, aiming to share information and keep us informed.

1. **Walking in the Light.**

Small things with enormous consequences.

He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. Luke 16:10

Dear Friends,

As I am writing this the Nobel Prize for Peace for 2010 is still outstanding. Whoever will be nominated we can be sure at a decisive moment in the person's life he/she has taken a step, a small decision, which culminated years later in this prestigious award. Awards may not come to all this side of the grave, but we have the promise of crowns awaiting the faithful.

Whether you reflect on this text from a positive perspective or negatively, the result still boils down to the fact that input bears consequences, either as a blessing to you or as a burden to your quality of life.

It is my wish to inspire you this day to embark on some small steps that can enhance your life and those around you. Please reflect on what is within your means to make this world a better place. I would like to give some examples in various spheres of life. Consider the small step in your *persona*/life by reading the Bible more regularly (check the promise in Ps 119:130), or to pray more regularly for a person/entity God lays on your heart-that might imply turning your cell phone off.

Show more appreciation in your *marriage* irrespective of the response of your partner. A small “thank you” instead of taking each other for granted can reap lots of fruit. Too easy? Well, you can take the step to help with the dishes. Daily affirm your *children* with a hug and well wishes before it is too late. Keep contact with your *grand/parents* before the connection is severed for ever. Take a conscious decision to be an ambassador for Christ at *work* especially if you interact with people, but also in your general dedication to your tasks. Smile more and ask God for wisdom how to respond to each person that crosses your path.

A last example, save our planet by taking the small step not to waste water, electricity or other resources.

Now in your mind’s eye see every reader doing one small thing and realize the positive effect on themselves, their families, loved ones, those who wait (despondently) in long lines, to Mother Nature, etc.

Hereto we need to constantly pray to God: *Keep steady my steps according to thy promise, and let no iniquity get dominion over me* Ps 119:133.

2. What shall we say about all these?

{Reflections on the current national and international news events will be mirrored by/in the Word of God to console, direct and challenge (where needed).}

How appreciative are we of investigative journalism? Do they just trouble our minds and complacency (I do/did not want to know!) or are we really happy when the truth is exposed? This has been my struggle around the dilemma and pressure on the Nestle Company not to buy milk coming from a farm belonging to Grace Mugabe. The Company indicated that the suspension of the utilization of milk deriving from this source will jeopardize the availability of milk and related products to the people who are already suffering in Zimbabwe. It was apparently easier not to know or just to turn a blind eye.

I guess at the forefront of this revelation will be the accusation of unjust practices. This is something the Bible is very clear about. The prophets and Jesus sacrificed their own quality of life and jeopardized their own lives to expose and call on unjust practices to stop (Is.45:21,24; Amos 5:7-12; Zep.3:5, Jn 5:30).

My reflection today concentrates around the question: Who are we dealing with? Is life about survival or are there morals to adhere to? How does one make a value judgment who to support and who not? Can I sacrifice certain principles in favor of the *possible* benefits to the poor and suffering majority?

Are we prepared to complicate our lives with principles which might get us sidelined, targeted, into trouble? We might argue about the difficulty to trace injustice or how do we untangle injustice? Life is such a mess anyway, what difference can I make? Let us just struggle to survive and forget the rest.

Sure it is tough and I doubt whether we are all called to be Superman protecting the world from evil influences, and yet maybe if we reflect on our lives, just maybe we might be in a position to enhance the quality of lives of others or make a positive contribution to their lives-directly or indirectly. Do think about this. Those of who has the luxury, be wise with your labor, expertise, investments, and support.

Rather gain less materially, but much more in peace of mind in the knowledge that I did not knowingly compromised the quality of lives of others.

Luther took a stand at a critical stage in the life of the Church based on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I hope that likewise we will be guided, our minds and

conscience pricked to do what right and fitting despite discomfort that this brings. We were never promised easy lives, but we are promised the accompaniment of the Divine presence.

3. Joys and sorrows.

{Birthdays; Anniversaries; Baptisms; Special Announcements and New Members' info is waiting to be published here. It's all up to you!!!!}

Pastor Steven Mokwai (born 23 September 1937) passed away on the 19th September 2009 at his home in Bloemfontein. He was laid to rest in Jakobsdal on the 26 September 2009.

He served ELCSA in the capacity as an Evangelist, Pastor, Dean and Director of the Scholarship Fund. During his retirement he played a pivotal role in keeping the vacant Bloemfontein – East Parish and in particular St Petrus (Heidedal congregation), afloat. With the arrival of Pastor Brandt he found a vibrant congregation with a functioning Choir and Men's League, the first organizations that stagnate and die during the absence of a leader. He will be sadly missed by everyone whom he touched in his years of life.

We also commit the Matthys and related families to God's care for comfort with the passing on of **Sr Katriena Matthys** of Upington on the 8th September 2009. We were blessed by her life, especially in the life of her son, Dean Matthys whom she selflessly has given to God and His Church. May God heal the longing hearts and in His time fill the enormous void with her precious memories.

4. Chess (nee CHURCH) moves: Bishop to...

{All the movements of the Bishop (and deans), where they sow, plant, water will be made known so you can pray to God for these ventures at your Prayer groups and during Worship services}

PEK VISIT 2009 by Rev. M. Manong

The visit to the Pomeranian Evangelical Church by the Bishop, Rt. Rev. W.R. Bowles, Br. Joe Jongolo, Sr. Margaret Morolong and myself, on behalf of the ELCSA – COD and Br. Benjamin Manyora and Sr. Johanna Jacobs to the Pasewalk Circuit of the PEK was approved by Diocesan Council 88. The main reason for the visit was to evaluate the three years (2006 – 2009) activities between the two parties and to conclude other agreements that would be effective for the next three years.

The visit started on the 09 September 2009 with meetings at offices of the Berliner Missions Werk between the officials of the BMW and later on that day with the representatives of the Spandau and Steiglitz Circuits of the EKD who have partnership with the Moria and Western Cape Circuits of our Diocese. This meeting was very important in that it allowed the Diocesan leadership on Ecumenical relations to meet with the leadership of these Circuits.

One of the recommendations from this meeting is that these Circuits will try to solicit funds for our Diocesan Circuits partnership committees to come together so as allow for cohesion.

In the Pomeranian Evangelical Church, our visit was to Church kindergartens, Church Diaconic institutions and we also attended a Landeskirche (Diocesan) Youth gathering. The bishop and I ended our visit at the Landeskirche Ecumenical day on the theme “Sun of righteousness” based on Malachi 4:1 – 3. The overall theme of the PEK is Baptism. Many people in the region where the PEK is operational are not baptized as this was a former Communist ruled region. We in South Africa take baptism for granted because most of us are baptized when we were babies. We therefore need to be more sensitive towards the challenges of the PEK. One matter that we have to pray for the PEK is the fact that after 2012 this Church will not be in the form that we now know. They will merge with two Churches in the North Eastern part of Germany. We also need to know that Rev. Christa Goebel, the Ecumenical officer of the PEK will retire at the end of the year.

We also need to know that the PEK will have their annual synod on 14 – 16 October. This Synod will deliberate on the far reaching implications of the merger

with the two other Churches. We enjoin all Parishes to use Sunday 11/10/09 to intercede for our sisters and brothers in the PEK.

In my estimation the visit was a giant success story in that we were able to catapult the relationship between ELCSA – COD and PEK to a higher level.

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Tomorrow (God willing) Ikageng Centre in Bloemfontein will be a hive of activity when the Dean of the Free State Circuit will be elected. Please intercede for this process and the tasks of the dean in the coming months.

Likewise the Kalahari Circuit will be engaging in the same process on the 17th October. May God guide the outcome and shepherd the leader and the entrusted flock.

5. What about....?

So it's too dangerous, cumbersome, a waste of time to attend services at the Church on Sunday Eve or Midweek. Only two or three will pitch anyway,

What about....?

Setting up a time of prayer in your home and invite your nearby congregation members plus neighbors. Keep it very informal and focus on the promises from the Word of God initially. Invite the pastor/elder occasionally for a more formal service when a routine is established. Do provide a cup of tea afterwards (if it is within your means), but prevent that this turn into a party, unless.... it can be a Bring and Share and can result in an Agape Meal which is another bonus. The idea is to duplicate your gathering in all the streets and wards so that you can shine like a beacon of Hope.

6. Spotlight on....

Rev Darryl Abrahams has been appointed the co-coordinator of Theological Reflection for our Diocese. As a means towards theological reflection we draw your attention and focus the spotlight on our **Message Board Discussion/Forum** (on the right side of the homepage) *in* this issue. Now you have the opportunity to

get that creative juice going. You now have the platform to ask that question that has been always bugging you: Why are we Lutherans doing this? Why are we Lutherans still doing this? It is time to make that comment about an issue that every body is missing or alluding all the time. Maybe you have an idea for the Bishop, a challenge for the COD to be more real in the Church or Life in South Africa.

We invite in particular the laity, young and old, but also the clergy to post questions, comments, quotations, etc. at this site. Let's stimulate one another. Be controversial-you might not get a reaction, but somewhere somehow someone is chewing on your views and you might just enhance the life of someone in the future. See your views on the Message Board!

7. What's in it for me?

This week 6 spiritual books are up for grabs. Simply register at *Create a message board profile* (on www.elcsacod.co.za) and you can be one of the lucky readers that will be energized for a whole year. Surf the COD-website and more prizes can be won.

Wishful thinking

It is still my wish to inform, stimulate, to involve and to grow the visitors to our site. It is still my wish to hear from you. Please volunteer to contribute to any of these regular features. You also need to tell us your needs and whether these regulars are sufficient and cater for your expectations. Any other brilliant ideas will be gladly accommodated. Eagerly waiting to hear from you!!

The editor can be contacted at newtonbrandt@gmail.com

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