

Miktav Shin (Letter 22)

Dear Reader,

This newsletter is dedicated to the idea of Caring –caring for God’s glory and for our neighbor. I hope that God will give us wisdom to move beyond our own goals and peace to bring comfort and meaning to the lives of others. May we do what is within our means and operating sphere, whilst praying for those beyond our reach and touch. May God have mercy on His people.

Thanks to Bishop Bowles, Pastors Manong, Standaar, Hennie van Wyk, for trigger thoughts and contributions that gave rise to some of the contributions.

Blessed is the one who takes the time to read this newsletter.

1. Walking in the light

So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.” (Luke 17:10)

Taking credit that is not yours can be very risky! In fact it can be your downfall!

In the work of establishing the kingdom of God, our participation is graciously allowed not needed. We do not come with anything that is not given to us as gifts. Coming to faith, accepting Christ, working for Christ are all aspects that comes about through the gracious intervention of the Holy Spirit who enlighten our hearts and minds and then equip us.

Thus, when we all eagerly set out to spread the love of God and fruit come from this labor, it is not because we are so smart and skilled, but the same process is duplicated in the lives of others. The same happens when we decide to join or

build an organization-the youth, choir, etc. The worse mistake we can make is to claim the growth for and because of ourselves.

Unfortunately, that is what Satan wants us to do, to claim the credit, because then the honor comes to us and does not go to God! In the process we cut off our dependence on God, the True Vine and go it solo, just to get egg on our face and make a mess of our efforts because God is not running the show.

Pride is the most useful tool in Satan's hand to annihilate us in the Christian race. Conceited Christians do not pray and spend time with their Master-they are the master! How to prevent this? Always meditate on the Amazing Grace.

Acknowledge God in all the success; give Him all the glory and stay humble in the constant realization that we can plant or water, but God alone gives the growth (1 Cor.3: 6-7). Never allow people to praise you so that you become conceited. Graciously listen to their words, but then turn the focus to God and indicate we are useless without the guidance and providence of God.

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).}

Two "revelations" came to light in the last days that are independent and yet affect the whole of the African Continent.

The first was the 2010 Ibrahim Index of African Governance measures the delivery of public goods and services to citizens. This index is compiled by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation which provides a comprehensive ranking of African countries according to governance quality. The Foundation uses indicators across four main categories, viz. Safety and Rule of Law; Participation and Human Rights; Sustainable Economic Opportunity; and Human Development, as proxies for the quality of the processes and outcomes of governance. South Africa scored not so well in certain areas, but that is not the aim of this exercise.

The second revelation was the scourge of mass rape in African countries where particularly governance was lacking and conflict and war was the order of the day. It is appalling that men would take out their vengeance and frustrations on women who cannot defend themselves. It is even more shocking when those who are supposed to come to their aid and protect them now are also prone to do the same atrocity.

We can only condemn this on every level and appeal that these barbaric acts come to an end. Closer to home we need to highlight the problem of rape by making men aware of the devastating dynamics that goes with this. The Bible is not silent on this and in 2 Samuel 13 reveals to us wickedness of this act and the consequences for Tamar who life was never the same again, despite the superficial support and comfort of her brother.

The synod dealing with the theme “*Towards a new morality*” has urged the various leagues to deal with this theme and I think it is just fitting that we prevent these crimes against women by publicizing it in our meetings and gatherings through the study of this incident. The Women’s League is urged in addition to reach out to rape victims and give support.

3. Joy with the sorrow

Please spare a prayer for all students, but especially the Matrics (and their families) and their exams that are coming up. Pray for their future endeavors and plans; that doors of learning might open and financial assistance may materialize. Pray for sound choices of careers that is befitting to each personal style and character.

Pray for their protection after the exams, that they will live responsible and constructive lives and not come into temptation in the wake of too much freedom.

To those who mourn the loss of a loved one today

Please read Rom 5:1-6. Please remember with the light naturally comes the shadow. God is in charge of both and can see us through these times of shadow when our loved ones are taken up to the inexpressible Light. I plea with you to patiently climb the ladder back to hope following the guidance of Paul in this text. Let us persevere in our suffering. Our perseverance will bring about a true character as we struggle with God. This is ok and natural so that a new communion of love can emerge and we can realize His love for us. May the Holy Spirit comfort you!

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}

Oudtshoorn I hear was a huge success and we want to congratulate Pastor Adams and her team for all their efforts.

The Ministerial and Diocesan Council could also meet and do amongst others some forward planning for 2011. Various tasks were assigned to the Faith and Order Commission to assist with the spiritual upliftment of the Diocese. On the cards in May will be a Music and Choir Festival in Bloemfontein, whilst the Bishop's Dinner in Cape Town that will blow your mind. We ask all Lutherans to plan and attend to this venture.

We are grateful to God for three completing students assigned to our Diocese, viz. Charlton Broekstein, Alison Williams and Mandisa Hlongwane. Whilst we are

grateful, we intercede for more workers in His vineyard as the vacancies are just increasing. Kenosis is awaiting ladies to be trained as deaconesses, whilst LTI and the University will train male and female pastors.

Also intercede that our COD delegation can make it to General Assembly as the cash flow is tight. Please urge all parishes to pay any outstanding contributions as soon as possible to make this possible.

5. Spotlight on.... Forward Planning

Soon you will be called upon to do your planning for congregation, parish, and circuit for next year.

Planning is a sign of efficiency or so they say. Is this principle also fitting in the realm of the Church? What if forward planning can tire you by the mere fact of realizing all the efforts that need to be taken to be successful in all these plans? What if the future drains you of your effective utilization and enjoyment of the present? We are setting up meetings and events months, sometimes even years in advance (to get the best speakers). Is this God's wish and directive?

How are we to deal with this? How do we prevent the future from overwhelming us to the extent that you can get a breakdown for events that is only an illusion on the horizon!

Nature teaches us you need to prepare in advance, but we are also urged to live under the direction of God. Not in our own strength but by calling on His guidance and directives must we set out. Committing your ways to the Lord does not mean bringing God into the equation after you have made your plans.

We are not call upon to work ourselves to death. Whether we want to sustain the Church's income, bring people to conversion, build the unity in the congregation. Let us do it with the knowledge as the hymn writer says: The work belongs to you O Lord the labor that we undertake. Rest is part of serving the Lord. The day of rest was instituted not for God, because He was tired, but for us who are fallible

human beings of flesh and blood who cannot take the stress of labor without periods of relaxation and spiritual renewal.

May God be with us these last weeks of this church year.

6. What about....Saving a thought for the elderly

We have been speaking around this subject before, but this time, under this heading I'm giving you a mixed masala with the hope that maybe you can enrich the life of someone.

Do the elderly feature in our holiday plans or do they burden your plans of fun? Can we stand in for someone who has been taking care of an elderly family member all these months and who needs a break too?

Do they feature in your Church's Christmas plans? I know you as a congregation are (hopefully) planning a "Christmas" meal and food parcel for those who served the congregation very well in the past. You might even extent this beyond your congregational borders which need to be commended, but do you really care and utilize the elderly. Do we communicate with them about **their** needs and wishes or do we decide on their behalf?

At sixty or sixty-five they are told go and rest-you deserve it. Indeed they do, but the reality is unless they are kept constructively busy, they die of boredom. Due to fear, spite, control or whatever reason, decades of accumulated insight and wisdom are simply sidelined and we try to re-invent a wheel and stumble from mistake to mistake because we need to prove ourselves that we are capable and suitable for a position.

This need not be so. Let us contemplate mentorship that is constructive, involvement that is enriching to all involved, respect that spans the generations.

Our time and turn will also come, thus let us sow now and hopefully reap the benefits. Hopefully? Yes hopefully because you never know with these youngsters- are we not doing the same now letting the elderly down?

7. Wishful thinking

“Half of our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save.” Will Rogers

The Hebrew alphabet we are numbering our newsletters by, will come to an end soon. A new editor will then be needed. Please feel free to indicate your interest to me, the Webmaster or Pastor Standaar.

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