



## Miktab Tet (Letter 9)

Dear Reader,

To assist us during the Lenten period guiding principles were put forward week by week to keep us focused on Christ and His attributes. This year it was omitted from the ELCSA Almanac, but the guiding factor would have been that of “imitation” (eyes focusing on the Lord) as suggested for Oculi Sunday. May indeed the longing be to be more Christ like in our actions and words so that others, through our example, can come to the realization of the mercy and love of Christ.

This newsletter was inspired by the participants at the Pastors’ Convention in Athlone where the various views expressed, the challenges of the Church and options open to be true witnesses triggered this edition.

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

### **1. Walking in the light**

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfil every good resolve and work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess 1:11,12).

The ministry of encouragement can involve many things as directed by the guiding Holy Spirit. Intercession can be an aspect, verbal encouragement, words of appreciation and support, written notes and in these days SMS and related



messages can pick us up and help us forward sometimes during a difficult patch on the road called life. Paul realized the power of encouragement and words of motivation when he embarked on all his writings.

It is thus helpful in a major endeavor such as our Lenten walk, that we get a fresh breath of air in our sails to help us along. Lenten challenges are real and we are constantly undermined to surrender our resolve and to compromise. However today just recap the application of the ashes some weeks ago and your decisions when the Holy Spirit touched your heart and mind.

These decisions were based on sound principles and intentions and it is crucial to recharge at the Power source as we cannot compete and complete our walk in our own strength. Recall that you are indeed a witness for the living Christ. He made you worthy and your dedicated efforts are to bring glory to His achievements and victory on Calvary. So persevere in the grace of God. Utilize the opportunities created by the Holy Spirit and may many a lost sheep be reunited with the true Shepherd and Guide of the flock. It is where we are open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit that things come together in lives of people that are ready to abandon their lives through Christ.

We will never be aware of the inner workings in the lives of people, their struggles, but might just bring the last and most crucial puzzle piece this person was looking for. May we be available to our Lord in His vineyard and harvest.

## ***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).}



Last time we focused on the plight of the poor, their lack of true spokespersons and representation. We saw that even the Church is failing the poor due to her own challenges and internal issues. As if, as a prompter to rectify this situation, three days were set aside by the clergy to focus on our role in the COD when it come to service to our communities or our Diaconate role. Allow me to just put some of my thoughts to paper and hopefully we can start a process in this regard.

The Church is supposed to Jesus here on earth. Through the Church, Christ is present on earth and continues His work. The idea of a continuous forward movement can be deduced from Jesus' plan: As the Father sent me so I send you (John 20:21) He set the example how to act in the kingdom of God, in fact, He ushered in the kingdom and made everything successive action possible. A major task of the Church is to provide for the needs of the vulnerable. We need to realize their prayer for daily bread, justice and acceptance. Diaconate work is thus the application of faith in Christ to life, where life involves the daily living struggles of people that come our way and that call for action.

Lots of reflection went into our tasks and challenges last week. The reality is clear for everyone to see, sometimes to the extent that we can be paralyzed. The solutions need to be sought with the Creator and Sustainer who promised to provide and thus He will guide us with His Holy Spirit how to go about our tasks. May we indeed call upon God to open our minds in this regard. Till you do so, consider the following:



The best suggested starting point for Diaconate work is a commitment from the local Council and congregation to make a difference in the lives of people and to plan accordingly.

Financial priorities need to be prayerfully assessed otherwise funds will always be lacking. Assessing the need closes to the Congregation or in the congregation should be the next step and committed members be gathered to facilitate the process. It is important to note that whilst we have various talents, Diaconate work must never be the burden of a select few who work till the brink of burnout whilst other look on.

Do what you can and not what you cannot achieve or sustain. Link up with other groups who do likeminded tasks and so share the burden and gain strength from one another. It will be the ideal to duplicate strategies in all the congregations of the parish, but this must be done in a sustained way with the guidance of the Spirit. It is best to initiate projects from your own coffers rather than scouting for funding from an external source. The congregation needs to be touched by the plight of others and make a local plan. Outside funding can be requested at a much later stage based on what has been put in place and as a counter challenge.

This will need to suffice for now, but I leave you this thought: Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen. (Eph.3:20,21)



### 3. Joy with the sorrow.

Congratulations to all our members who have graduated during this period or who will reap the benefits of their actions soon.

To the reader who is missing a loved one who has passed on, may the Comforter be with you and support you during this time. Our condolences to the Laingsburg parish with the loss of Jacobus Booysen, elder, choir leader and long time co-coordinator of the Funeral support Group.

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

{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}

We praise God for traveling mercies for the Shepherds of the COD who made it safe to the Pastors' Convention in Athlone and back to their respective homes and parishes. May this period of reflection and discussion bring to fruition action and support where it is needed. Our Bishop is traveling and visiting in the Eastern Cape on an Episcopal visit. May God bless his stay and interaction with Dean Maho and his flock and may their witness be enhanced in the region.

### 5. What about....

Making a difference –at work- this Lenten season.

The last letters made an appeal to call upon and to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us and steer our faith into action (as called upon by St James) in our relationships. This week allow me to unpack this in a practical way and focus on our various interactions and contributions at work.



It is necessary from time to time to evaluate your contribution at work towards your employer and fellow employees. Never take your presence for granted, as you might have a particular calling to those around you and beyond. Constantly set out to render the best service to those you interact with.

Paul urges us to work and live for God's glory and in the process others benefit from our faithfulness. This is the direct opposite to using your position to lord over people and frustrate their wishes.

This boils down to act positively all the time, not to get into the temptation to be drawn into the conclusions of the majority as you might compromise your principles. The conscience must never be allowed to be numbed. Silence in the face of misconduct can ultimately have dire repercussions for you too.

This does not necessarily need to involve grave actions such as theft of various forms or corruption, but also actions of attitude where deliberate vital service is compromised and clients are frustrated due to time that is wasted and processes are not streamlined towards a speedy solution.

Non-confrontationally, do challenge people to evaluate their actions and urge them to a more fulfilled life and work style. I hope you will have a splendid time at work. Do constantly thank God for this opportunity and spare a thought for the unemployed.

## **6. Spotlight on.... Holy Communion for Children**

In order to streamline the divergences in the various parishes and to halt practices that are not conducive and supporting the Sacrament of Holy Communion, study papers were tabled at the last Pastors' Convention.



These papers served to initiate discussion and soul searching so as to come with a joint venture and uniform implementation strategy where all participants are winners. The discussion, although around for a lengthy period, was re-ignited by the new Constitution allowing baptized members to the Table of the Lord (Part IV, Chapter 3, 3:1).

Given the background of the Holy Communion from her Jewish roots, where children actively participated in the Passover ritual, this constitutional guide is not so far fetched and heretical.

Theologically, we as Lutherans have already committed ourselves to involve children in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and the same crucial faith related aspects apply. Our attitude and tradition towards the preparation and reception of the elements (bread and wine-the Body and Blood of our Lord) by participants seems to be the bone of contention now. Who can participate, when, how, and why?

It is my hope with these teasers to spark debate and discussion in the various congregations. Please familiarize yourselves about Passover and the traditions surrounding it as it can only make the recollections of liberation so much more potent. It is my hope that your viewpoints on Holy Communion for children will reach Pastors Chris Hendricks and Siphon Mthethwa who were assigned to coordinate all these efforts.

## **7. What's in it for me?**

Tell us about your views concerning Holy Communion for Children in your congregation/parish. What are you currently doing, or how do you substitute it, if so? Share your stories and suggestions.



The Message Board is waiting to capture your views and discussions (and on anything else!) Handy spiritual books are up for grabs for the ones posting the most creative views! Your efforts here can just stimulate others (even internationally to embark on your suggestions and enhance the lives of many!)

### *Wishful thinking .....*

To accomplish great things we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe (Anatole France). Please encourage others to subscribe to our news letter which aims 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](mailto:newtonbrandt@gmail.com)

