

## *Miktav Tsade (Letter 18)*

**Dear Reader,**

This newsletter will be one of several that will dwell on the spiritual input, deliberations and recommendations of 18<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Cape-Orange Diocese that met in Bloemfontein the last few days. A roadmap has now been constructed for the next two years that we will strive **TOWARDS A NEW MORALITY**. The recommendations will be a guide and the measurable steps that can be taken to achieve a better Church and society where we operate. Creative steps, beyond this framework, however, are encouraged as that too will contribute towards the establishment and realization of the kingdom of God.

This newsletter I call *Overheard at the Synod* and will deal with the Spiritual aspects that undergirded the deliberations of the days. (Note that full transcripts and photos from the Secretariat will soon be available on the website.) I want to thank Bishop Bowles, Bishop Swartz, Dean Bezuidenhout, Pastor Darryl Abrahams (Bible Study Leader), Rev. Danise for their specific inputs at the Synod. Regular readers will see a change in the format of this newsletter due to this coverage of the Synod. This will be regularized again in the future.

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

### **JOY WITH THE SORROW**

It was indeed a blessed occasion on Sunday 8 August, when merit certificates were issued to Johanna Beukus (Aunty Joe, 33 years) and Emeritus Pastor Seekoei (30 years) for distinguished and faithful service to ELCSA. Likewise, Pastors Britz; Melando; Dean Matthys and Dean Broekstein were awarded for 30 years of service in the fulltime ministry. We salute these brothers and sister for the endurance shown, the outstanding vision and ability. May the legacy they are leaving inspire others. We pray that they can continue to mentor those who follow in their footsteps. May God reward you for your commitment.

**To those who mourn the loss of a loved one today**

*The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer (1 Peter 3:12).*

Walk with the Lord along the road

Your strength He will renew

Wait on the Everlasting God

And He will wait on you

## **WALKING IN THE LIGHT**

### **a) The opening and closing sermon by Bishop Bowles**

The induction of the delegates, which is a call to faithful participation in the Synod, was preceded by a call by the Bishop to be *watchful servants as dwellers in the kingdom of God* (Luke 12:32ff). This is a huge responsibility in a challenging world which is out to destroy the kingdom of God. To be in the world, but not from the world is tough as we are called upon to surrender and forsake what is the order of the day in a materialistic world. To go against the stream is not easy, but in the context of morality it is crucial to be of benefit to those who are vulnerable. We are called upon to take a stance and be the light and salt of the earth. Life is at stake and compromises will mean death to those who are voiceless.

He likewise urged the delegates and observers under the theme *Restoration and protection promised* (Is 43: 1-2) before the closing of Synod not to fear the task that is ahead of them. Drawing on history how during Apartheid, Synods and Synod decisions would not be favorably accepted by the powers that be. These caused severe problems for the delegates, likewise today, although we are in a completely different dispensation we need to display the same role and expose what is unacceptable on all levels of society. We can never fear opposition and He called upon the delegates to implement the decisions of Synod in spite of opposition and challenges as the Protector is with us and will support our endeavors.

### **b) Bible Study by Pastor D. Abrahams**

As a background introduction to the theme of the Synod, the Bible study leader reflected on South Africa and her statistics as one of the world's most violent societies. On all levels values are trampled upon and compromises enforced as accepted that has dire consequences to the accepted norms that need to govern proper conduct. He reflected furthermore (on a micro scale) about the severe ills and challenges (substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, dysfunctional families, etc) that beset society. Bringing the two together he concluded that something is fundamentally wrong in South African society. He then embarked on the role of the church and particularly the prophetic role of the church to address these challenges.

Using Isaiah 65 and the transitions that came about, he outlined the history up to this point, that up till now, the prophet has the task to denounce sin and with the denunciation, the consequences. However, suddenly as if all what was said previously is overridden, there is total prophetic announcement of a glorious future. I will create (bara) – the same word used in

## ELCSA-COD

Genesis 1. New heaven and earth (we have to understand the prophets' world view) – it was more than 2000 years back; Heaven denoted the realm above; earth – a total transformation of the cosmic order; hence where exploitation with cease; and people enjoy the fruits of their labor where all will enjoy the fullness of life – in terms of age. It is society at peace with God; because the 'former' will not come to his mind. And now in prophetic language: a wolf with eat with the lamb; and the lion and the ox.

Prophetic "codes" "language of the future is extremely important; Here one of them is the mountain – Isaiah 25 – the full disclosure of God. Which at the beginning as "absent". It is a society at peace with God – Our needs are totally in tune with Yahweh's – as verse 24 implies. Secondly "as for the day of a tree... verse 22b – the image of a tree. Yet – future orientation is grounded in history – in Jerusalem; it takes history as its point of departure; it is not without history but grounded in history - in the movement towards this glorious future. Prophets announce salvation taking a particular history as its starting point; it is not contra- or supra-history. This future is a re- presentation of the *Original Divine Intent: as idyllic as it was before it was tainted by the fall. The Bible opens and closes with this Paradise – except that in between – it acquires a glorious re-presentation of the divine intent.* Naturally sin tainted the divine intent; and for that the Torah (or Law) was required to correct the morality of the People of God. The Order is always: chaos to order; sin to salvation; brokenness to transformation;

Since sin tainted Paradise ideal, it resulted in this flawed humanity and its morality. As a corrective, God introduced the Torah. This tension between God Original Intent and creation in sin is a tension which is only resolved when God will introduce the glorious fulfillment of re-Creation (which Isaiah 65 verses 17 to 25 foresaw). As prophets, we must read the "signs of the times" as the Kairos Documents requires us to do. That means – practically we must engage in a proper social analysis in order to determine the root causes which influence our moral crises. On the basis on this social analysis, we must denounce the sin and its root causes.

### **c) Evening devotions by Dean Bezuidenhout and Pastor Danise**

Striving towards a new morality was perceived to have both a divine and human dimension. On the one side change was perceived as the gracious intervention of God (Ezek.36:25-27) who gives the cleansing element (clean water) and regeneration (new heart) to bring about a transformation that is fitting to His standards. Furthermore, continuous assistance (the Spirit) to maintain the guiding principles is given to be faithful to God's decrees and laws.

## **ELCSA-COD**

Arriving at a new morality, however, also has a human response emulated in the call of Paul (Rom.12; 1ff) to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to Him. The dangers of conformity must be realized and all efforts made to learn from history and our shortcomings (pattern of this world v2) to not undo the gracious efforts Christ has put in place. The mind must be constantly in tune with God and constantly renewed to emulate the principles of the kingdom.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

- South Africa is the second in line as the most violent society in the world?
- That the divorce rate will soon overtake the amount of marriages that is consummated?
- We can become a moral society again – it starts with each one of us. Begin in the mercy of Christ!

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

*Earn your success based on service to others, not at the expense of others (H Jackson Brown Jr)*

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Richest Blessings

**The Editor: COD-Newsletter**

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