



# Miktav Zain (Letter 7)

Dear Reader,

On the eve of Lent which will start next Wednesday it is my prayer that indeed this yearly commemoration will bring you even closer to your Redeemer and truest Friend. As we contemplate on His Love and victory over death may you be secure in the knowledge that now nothing can separate you from the love of God. Have a blessed Lenten Season!

This newsletter comes to you thanks to Dean Bezuidenhout and Bishop Bowles, for trigger ideas and contributions. I hope that others will join me with their contributions. Blessed is the one who takes the time to read this newsletter.

## 1. Walking in the light

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"(Is.40:90)

In the spirit of the prophetic tradition and with courage the clarion call rang forth on Sunday when Dean Bezuidenhout used this text to under gird his ministry and the way forward for his Circuit. Elaborating on the experiences of the Israelites in exile, he stressed that they moved from being honoured citizens in Jerusalem to slaves; from being free to practice their religion at will to being forced to entertain their captives in religious song; from sufficiency to want, from having to have-nots.



Indeed the situation was desperate and dire for some 70 years and then it was radically changed by their God's intervention.

The Dean, based on this text, witnessed that he will not be afraid, as the unchanging God who proved Himself, is still present to guide and strengthen us. He related how God has been his guide and strength thus far, and he knows that God will make a way in the future. Urging his flock to trust in God he encouraged them to keep their focus on God rather than on their problems.

May we likewise take courage that God is present in our struggles no matter the extent. He will not allow us to experience more than we can endure. Trust in the promises of God and wait for the herald announcing that your time in the crucible is over and behold your God come to your aid.

We are also urged by Paul (2 Cor.1:3ff) that should we experience God's mercy and comfort it is our task to reach out to those who are still entangled in their life struggles. May we indeed do so and come alongside those in need.

## **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).}

It is with sadness that we take note of the predicament of our president and the problems that he had unleashed upon himself and the country. It is not easy when the first citizen become the shame and laughingstock of the nation; when he is challenged to account on all fronts; when a radio station call on the citizens to call in and suggest the best pick-up line that our president would use on the mother of his next child. Indeed a sad state of affairs.



One good thing that came out of this is the scope of the freedom of our media, making it clear that our president is accountable to the nation that he must subscribe to the national policies and set the example. He cannot afford himself the luxury of a despotic king who can act irrespective of the consequences of his deeds to his subordinates.

It is my hope that our policies, in particular the quest to curb the HIV/Aids pandemic, will not be made redundant when we act as if saying: Do what I say, do not do what I do. Already we are at risk to lose a generation that will underpin our labour force and support system so that the lifecycle can continue effectively and the economy can keep on sustaining those who need it most in their old age.

I am reminded that obedience is far better than apologies, (although apologies do have their rightful place and can have positive effects), as taught by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. He concludes His teaching (Matt. 7:24) with the choices we have in life and their consequences. Either, we listen to God's directives and obey them, and will be considered as a house built on the rock, or we will listen and disobey and be linked to a house built on the sand which will come to ruin when the forces of nature are unleashed against it.

Whether President Zuma will survive his term of office or will be re-elected is immaterial at this stage. The crucial thing for us, young and old, leaders or followers is to be aware that all of life's options have consequences. We are not to see what we can get, rather value our contributions in what we and others become through our actions. The more superior our leadership the more dire our consequences if we err. May we learn from the mistakes of others? May we be humbled by our own vulnerability in the face of temptations and may we strive to build, to encourage, uplift and make a positive contribution whilst we still have the time.



### 3. Joy with the sorrow.

Our condolences go out to the Stuurman and related families with the loss of their father and mentor of many pastors in the Cape Orange Diocese. Uncle Augie for the last decades was resident in Belhar with his daughter Chrissie from where he supported all the events in the COD. He served on various structures throughout the Church, and especially the Archives Committee before ill-health set in. He will be sorely missed, but I am sure his advice, support and the structures that he helped put in place will be of benefit to many ultimately.

### 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}

The Induction of Dean Brandt (*31<sup>st</sup> January*) at Batho congregation and that of Dean Bezuidenhout (*7<sup>th</sup> February*) at Rietfontein in the Kalahari Circuit are now something of the past. Both were memorable occasions (with DVD's available) capturing Bishop Bolwes on both occasions with a guitar rendition of "I come to the garden alone"...to urge his deans to spent time alone with God as therein will be their strength.

He also encouraged them to hold on to Paul's witness and promise of God in 2 Cor 12: 9: My grace is sufficient for you. He highlighted the challenges in the Diocese and Circuits and expressed the hope that relationships can be cherished instead of dire decisions that renders us apart.

Between these two inductions the Bishop visited the Athlone Youth Centre and related parish on an Episcopal visit. Intercession is requested for God's guidance at the Centre and the new leadership that needs to come about as a historic Pastors' Convention in conjunction with the Swedish church is envisaged in March 2010.



## 5. What about....

Making a difference this Lenten season.

Next week with Ash Wednesday we will contemplate again the love our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had and have for us. Every year we often contemplate how we can show our thankfulness to Christ? On various occasions in the Scriptures Jesus showed us that this need to be done to our neighbor and in so far you have done something for them, you have done it to Him (Matt.25).

Allow me thus, if Christ's sacrifice meant something to you, to encourage you in addition to possible cessation of various actions or recommitting to spiritual aspects for 40 days, to reach out to your neighbour in a practical way. I would like to focus on the home and your career. Certain careers were traditionally deemed a calling from God, whilst the mediocre did not get its importance. This Lenten time we can do something for Christ at home and at work.

We are appalled at the lack of commitment to service delivery, the long lines our people are exposed to and just the basic slackness to daily chores. The deduction is that certain officials and employees just do not care. Good salaries are important, but the efforts to achieve it not.

This can be changed if we approached this Lent with the spirit of Christ. Christ made a huge difference in our lives, how about making a difference to those who we interact with everyday. You will need to pray the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom for your particular situation and possibilities. Maybe, just, maybe this will spill over to a lifestyle where everyday Christ is honoured for the health, wisdom and jobs He provides. We can make a difference, but only if Jesus makes a difference in our lives! May we imitate Him and consider the following:



*To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

(Prov.21:3)

*Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.* (Heb. 13:16)

## **6. Spotlight on.... Lutherans on the B.A.L.L.**

When the whole country is gearing up for the soccer extravaganza in some 120 days, the Free State Circuit launched the above theme last week taking their cue from this event and yet with other goals in mind for the whole year. The Circuit is gearing up for a year of outreach and unity building attempts where they will Build (one another), Accept (one another), Love (one another) and Learn (from one another). Despite our diverse circumstances in general in South Africa and in the Circuit we have so much to offer one another if only opportunities are created to open up to one another, reach out and assist one another.

It is the hope of the Circuit Council to do just that. Attempts will be made to build on Jesus the solid foundation, the interlocking bricks of each Lutheran with his or her talents and skills. Acceptance across the races and the class divides need to come about if we follow the command of Jesus to love one another.

This will indeed be a slow learning curve but with Christ at the helm, the outcomes for fellow Lutherans and later the broader community in need can be as our enthusiasm and God's providence determine.

May we all intercede for this Circuit and even if you are beyond its borders, nothing prevents you from getting a T-shirt, sticker or cap to encourage you to make this a lifestyle.



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

Tell us about your experiences when interacting with the structures of the Cape Orange Diocese, from Head-Office in Kimberley to your local congregation. Is “service delivery” on par or do you have suggestions how to make this better? 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 ....

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!

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