



**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
EVANGELIES LUTHERSE KERK IN DIE REPUBLIEK VAN NAMIBIË
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP**

**Word of Greeting at the VELKD General Synod by Bishop Ernst //Gamxamub
of ELCRN on 9th November 2017, in Bonn, Germany.**

**Sehr geehrter Präsidium,
Hohe Synode,
Liebe Schwestern und Brüder,**

First and foremost, let me greet you wholeheartedly from Hebrews 13: 8: **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”**

I bring you warm and heartfelt greetings from the entire ELCRN family which is still in a joyous celebration mood as we have the past weekend marked the 60th Anniversary of ELCRN as an independent church and also concluded the 500th Anniversary of Reformation during this year. During this festival of celebrations in the past week, we had historical reflections on the ground breaking work of the missionaries, the emergence of local clergy and co-workers for evangelization and the difficult period of war and the struggle for freedom.

We had Exhibitions and Displays on the history and current work of ELCRN through its institutions and variety of programs and projects. We celebrated ELCRN family Fun Day with traditional games, sports and other fun activities providing a relaxing atmosphere through which parishioners from across the country could share experiences, network and socialize. After the visionary and forward looking 60th Anniversary celebrations on Saturday, the 04th, where I delivered the Bishop’s address, we concluded the weekend with a celebration Worship Service which was also graced with the presence of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Namibia, President Dr Hage Geingob, the Governor of the Region and other high ranking government officials and ecumenical friends. The sermon of day was delivered by Bishop Emeritus Dr Zephania Kameeta which wisely reflected on the sermon text of the day.

Indeed 2017 was a great year for ELCRN and the entire Lutheran family. The rare privilege to host the 12th Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation in Windhoek Namibia and the official 500 Year of Reformation has not only boosted our local profile but also exposed and network our churches with Lutherans from around the world.

There is no doubt an increase understanding of reformation and ownership taking of the Lutheran Theology and its significance amongst our members and the Christian family in general. Our local National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) has develop a documentary on the 12th Assembly and 500 Years Festival and is selling it on an affordable price and many of our Parishes and individuals have acquired this and keeping it as a treasure. As UCC-NELC, We issued some reading materials for Sunday School,

Confirmation Classes and even a book for the adults, so that the Biblical Teachings of Luther could be cemented one again.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Let me officially register our recognition and appreciation for your generous and kind financial support to the United Church Council of the Namibian Evangelical Lutheran Churches [UCC-NELC], for the work of the Local Assembly Planning Committee, which enabled the smooth running of the preparations of the 12th Assembly as well as the 500th Anniversary of Reformation. As we all can testify today that these two events were a resounding success, and will be remembered for a long time to come. Congratulations to the global Lutheran Family. ***“Ecclesia Semper Reformanda.” (The church must always be reformed*** I can share with you that the three Lutheran Churches are committed to form one Church, though we don't want a cosmetic unity, but a real unity as Jesus prayed in John 17 and therefore we ask for your prayers.

During this historic year, we as ELCRN also had a chance to consolidate our internal workings and strengthen our structures and governance of our church and institutions. The recently concluded 27th Ordinary Synod held from 26th to 31st August 2017, critically reflected on the current and past challenges and resolved unanimously on a firm and visionary way forward for the ELCRN. We also elected the new ELCRN Church Council with a good balance of gender, generational mix and increase presence of lay persons in our leadership structures. The Synod adopted strong resolutions on the life of the church, the socio-economic and political situation in the country and emerging challenges.

In order to consolidate the current achievements and to turn the challenges in opportunities, the 27th Synod of ELCRN instructed the leadership to urgently undertake processes that will lead towards a Strategic Plan for the ELCRN for the next 5 to 10 years and we are finalizing arrangements to fulfill this assignment. This Plan should position the ELCRN to continue more meaningfully and in a strategic manner with the reformation agenda taking note of current and ongoing developments and challenges both locally and globally.

Furthermore we want to assure you, our European sisters and brothers, that we as ELCRN observe with concern the current challenges that you experience especially the alarming Church exits, the fast growing “Kirchlosigkeit” pose many critical and heartbreaking questions and demand a genuine search for answers, that the once mighty pillars of faith are now shaken. I comfort you in this way, **with God Who takes care of surprises in our midst; let us keep on preaching, inviting, praying and believing for a U-Turn to faith in Christ.**

Also the pain and suffering caused by the increased horrific acts of terrorism, the negative and destructive effects of Globalization, the growing intolerance against the recent flooding of refugees in Europe, the weakening unity of the European Union by the possible exit of countries such as Great Britain from the European Union. As ELCRN, we are concerned about the adverse consequences that may follow and we pray that the good Lord will make a way out of this precarious situation. In the same breath, we comment the Churches and Humanitarian organizations, which amidst criticism and stiff opposition harbored, protected and humanely cared for the refugees, based on the convictions of the Gospel. (Matthew 25)

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

As you were always grounded on the firm foundation of the life giving gospel of Jesus Christ stay firm on this foundation where your direction is coming from. What is happening around the globe today is most frightening, but as the faithful, fear should never dictate us or overcome us, but we should stand firm on our foundation by faith. As Trevor Saxby writes about a different side to the reformer Martin Luther: **“Finding God in Fear and Despair: Martin Luther,”** published on 15th May 2015, he writes: **“if you look deeper, you’ll find that Luther was very human. He knew phases of dark depression. Particularly in later life, with all his triumphs behind him, he experienced seasons of terror that God had utterly forgotten him and abandoned him to hell. His prayers and cries were met only with silence. He felt alone in the universe.”**

So Luther, the great champion of doctrinal reform, becomes Luther the troubled human being. He is someone we can relate to when we hit the rocks of life or hang on cliffs of horrible despair. If he found a way through, then we can surely learn from it and find hope. The answer that Luther found was to allow tribulation to drive him to prayer and Scripture and above all, to God’s promises.

While this synod presents VELKD with the prospects to focus on the future; reaffirming confidence on the firm foundation that is Christ and in the roots of the Reformation, you are facing a future loaded with challenges, uncertainties, which must drive us all to God in prayer, to His Word (Sola Scriptura), and to His promises well-positioned in His Word. The ELCRN believes that the family of VELKD is gifted and by the power of Christ will set new perceptions and perspectives which will give direction in the ever changing Europe. May blessings be showered on you as the VELKD family, as you rededicate yourself to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28: 16-20) Be clothed by qualities that form the Lutheran Identity, namely:

- **to be Confessional**
- **to be Sacramental,**
- **to be Evangelical,**
- **to be Diaconal, and**
- **to be Ecumenical.**

These traits bind us together as the Global Lutheran Family. May the Name of the Lord be glorified.
“Soli Deo Gloria”

I thank you

Your brother in the Lord
Bishop Ernst //Gamxamûb
On behalf of the ELCRN Church Council
Namibia