

# DURBAN CENTRAL PARISH REPORT - 2011

presented to the Circuit Meeting/ ELCSA Durban Circuit  
on 17th February 2012 at St.Michael's Lutheran Church, Durban  
by Pastor Dr. Joe Lüdemann, Durban Central Parish Pastor

## 1. Preface

With a world seemingly more and more in crisis, when writing a report on God's work in our church, specifically the Durban Central Parish, one might be tempted in two ways – either we report on developments from a solely human perspective and join the chorus of those who have given up, lost hope and see only failure, or we might want to gloss over the real existing problems and challenges with „holy phrases“, which just reveal ignorance, fear or laziness to confront the issues at hand with God's help.

The watchword for this year points us to the way forward: **„My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.“** (2nd Corinthians 12:9) This is the basis of our work in God's church and it is a wonderful foundation for all our deliberations: God has given us enough grace – it is sufficient! When our weakness leads only to hopelessness, then God really gets going and works his „perfect power“. This gives us the hope, which we so desperately need, when we face the many challenges in our church and in society as a whole. It gives us the hope, that we are not in this alone – God's perfect power is there, and takes its place, where we through our human eyes see just weakness: a failing administration, hopelessness, being overburdened by work, a general lack of funds, a lack of commitment and dedication, a lack of teaching and empowering, power struggles, poverty, sickness and death. So this report will attempt to take an honest account of activities in Durban Central Parish – successes and failures – and, at the same time, sees the situation of God's church as never being hopeless, because God's power is there – in our weakness. After an assessment, we will aim to pave a way forward for 2012, in order to diligently do the work, which God has entrusted us with.

## 2. Introduction

Baba Mongameli – Dean T.C.Nzama, Mama Mongameli, members of the Circuit Council, congregational and parish delegates to the Circuit Synod, League representatives, dear colleagues – all pastors and guests – I greet you all in the wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! Amen. This report of work done in Durban Central Parish follows the structure proposed by the Dean. It presents statistics from parish financial and membership records and the observations, analysis and recommendations by the Parish Pastor.

## 3. Geography

The Durban Central Parish consists of six congregations and one preaching place.<sup>1</sup> These are found in the inner-city area of Durban (including South Beach, Glenwood, Berea, Morningside) and the immediate surrounding residential areas in the eThekweni municipality extending about 15km to the south (including Seaview, Montclair, Yellowwood Park and Wentworth) and 10km to the west of the inner city (including Cato Manor, Chesterville and Lamontville).

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<sup>1</sup> More details on Durban Central Parish, its congregations, Leagues, Partnerships, Guidelines and lots of pictures of events in the Parish can be found on the extensive website: [www.elcsadurban.co.za](http://www.elcsadurban.co.za)

a) **Residential diversity:** The area in which congregations of the Durban Central Parish are situated reflects the diverse spread of different types of residence typical for our countries urban areas: inner city flat and hostel dwellers in St.Michael's, old so-called townships served by Lamontville, Chesterville and Wentworth congregations, a mix of informal settlements and RDP houses in Cato Manor served by Cato Crest congregation and the residential suburbs of Seaview, Yellowwood Park, Montclair served by Othandweni and Seaview congregations. The growth of ELCSA congregations in suburbs, which were in Apartheid times classified as „white areas“, is an encouraging sign of a church, which follows its people – or committed members, which „pull their church“ into their new places of living, when moving out of townships.

The spread of the Durban Central Parish and the change of lifestyle of its members, when moving into a new environment, such as a suburb like Montclair, poses an exciting challenge to the church. How can ELCSA be a relevant church, that preaches the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, in such a way, that its members, who are increasingly adopting a so called „western lifestyle“ will hear this saving message and live according to it. How can we reach children going to schools, often former model C schools, that teach in English and where scholars often talk more English than isiZulu, even at home? How can a church teach its confirmands, attract the young urban professionals, console those, whose traditional support base has been eroded by a change of social environment and the sometimes diminishing role of the extended family?

b) **Cultural Diversity:** Another result of being a relevant church in an urban setting is the fact, that membership in Durban Central Parish is culturally diverse. We are all God's children, and His church should be sensitive to this fact! Although the overwhelming majority of our members are amaZulu, one congregation – Wentworth – is mainly made up „Coloureds“, while St.Michael's has a small group of „white“ members. Furthermore, Venda-, Setswana-, Sesotho-, Xhosa-speaking members and others attend St.Michael's. A truly urban and relevant church in Durban can not be solely isiZulu-speaking – it has to be as open-minded as possible, in order to address the needs of as many as possible and in order to win more members from different cultural backgrounds. More will be said on this challenge later.

c) **Neighbouring churches:** No man is an island – no church is on its own. In the case of Lutherans in Durban, we as ELCSA are not alone, although our members are often not aware, that a Lutheran sister church works amongst us (ELCSA-NT<sup>2</sup> in Umbilo, New Germany and Hillcrest), and that so called Lutheran free churches are also active this area (LCSA in Phoenix, Chatsworth, Inanda and Umlazi and FELSISA<sup>3</sup> in Westville). The geographical proximity of the Durban Evangelical Lutheran Parish of ELCSA-NT (also known as the congregations of Lutherkirche in Renshaw Rd/Umbilo and St.Paul's in Gordon Road, Morningside – which are in a process of being combined) puts the challenge of working together on our doorstep. More on this topic will be said later.

#### 4. Vision

### Rejoice - Renew - Reach Out

**Rejoice** in the Lord always! We as Lutheran Christians in Durban rejoice in the fact that we are God's children, created and loved by him in our diversity. Rejoicing in song and dance, with food and laughter. God is with us!

**Renew** - Create in me, oh Lord, a pure heart! We live out of God's mercy and forgiveness - a refreshing new start, whenever we turn to Him. As a nation with a past full of hurt and a present with many challenges and temptations, renewal through God's presence is vital and vitalizing.

<sup>2</sup> More information on the following websites: [www.elcsant.org.za](http://www.elcsant.org.za) (ELCSA-NT Church office), [www.elcdurban.org.za](http://www.elcdurban.org.za) (Umbilo Congregation), [www.newgermany.co.za](http://www.newgermany.co.za) (New Germany Congregation).

<sup>3</sup> [www.felsisa.org.za](http://www.felsisa.org.za) (FELSISA Church office)

**Reach Out** your hand and put it into my side - stop doubting and believe! Jesus' call to Thomas encourages us to reach out and share with others the blessings of God's presence. We share the doubts and fears of those whose everyday life is a struggle. We are open to God calling us to bring love and hope in word and deed. We are part of God's Mission to the World and as such see all our work as mission work.

We - members of the Durban Central Parish of ELCSA - proclaim the crucified and risen Christ. New Life given to us through our Saviour Jesus Christ makes us, as weak and failing as we often are, messengers of God's love for this world and all who live in it. An emphasis is laid on support of those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as on working towards better prevention measures.

Being messengers, who aim to preach the Good News by word and more so by action, we strive to work together with other churches worldwide towards unity and in our country towards justice, peace and reconciliation.

## 5. Mission

Rejoice, renew, reach out! This statement envisions a church that rejoices, its members being renewed and thereby the church itself constantly renewing its outlook, objectives and operations, on the basis of the gospel. This leads the church to reach out, not only to its own members, but to those beyond the church walls. All initiatives of Durban Central Parish are to be seen as mission work.

The church's mission is therefore to provide the resources – spiritual, intellectual and administrative – to enable members to take up their tasks (priesthood of all believers) with confidence, joy, forgiveness and the support they need.

## 6. Objectives

In Durban Central Parish, the church strives to:

- a) provide Sunday services, League conferences, ministries, retreats, Parish rallies, special services with an opportunity to rejoice in our faith and God's saving grace. Relevant liturgies, music styles and festivities serve this purpose.
- b) teach its members about the foundations of our faith and about the active role, that each member can play in the church. Bible Study groups are an important foundation for living a life of an active, empowered, relevant Lutheran. As a Lutheran Church, we believe that the Church must observe the way ordinary people speak (Dr. Martin Luther) and must be relevant to our urban congregants in its music, counseling, preaching and teaching.
- c) train its leaders, Council members, lay preachers, congregational helpers-in-charge, Sundayschool and confirmation class teachers, treasurers, League committee members, etc. Guidelines are developed to assist the proper running of different processes (such as scholarship allocations, elections, confirmation class, finance reporting, funeral preparations, special service preparations, etc.).
- d) provide counseling to those facing emotional challenges.
- e) provide practical assistance to those in abject poverty, by providing food parcels, assisting in accessing health care or other interventions.
- f) support projects or NGO's within the geographical confines of the Parish, by partnering with these organisations, donating time and money to their causes, or sourcing assistance from outside of our Parish towards these organisations.
- g) reach out to the large body of students that attend tertiary institutions of higher learning situated in the area of our Parish (especially UKZN and DUT). These students are to be catered for in our congregations – especially St. Michael's – and are supported to set up active branches of the nationwide ELCSA Students Organisation

(ELCSASO).

- h) be an active part of the wider ecumenical network in Durban, by promoting and using the services of Diakonia Council of Churches and its activities.
- i) grow its partnership with local ELCSA-NT congregations in an effort to work towards the goal of unity of ELCSA and ELCSA-NT. Joint services, devotions, workshops and personal interaction of members are initiated and supported to work towards this goal on a grass-root level.
- j) grow its partnership with overseas partners, especially Buer Congregation in Melle Circuit, by visiting one another and growing personal relationships.
- k) use modern means of communication to reach out - by hosting a Parish website and regularly updating it and by utilising e-mails and sms to cut down on administration costs.

## 7. Parish Council

<b>Surname</b>	<b>Initial</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>congregation</b>
Mr.Khoza	N.	Chairperson	St.Michael's
Mr. Mposula	S.P.	Deputy Chairperson	Seaview
Mr.Mabaso	N.	Secretary	St.Michael's
Ms.Dlamini	N.	Deputy Chairperson	Lamontville
Mr.Gasa	N.	Treasurer	Lamontville
Ms.Ndlovu	L.S.	Congregational Representative (CR)	Lamontville
Mr.Ntshela	N.C.	CR	Wentworth
Ms.Kleinbooi	B.	CR	Wentworth
Mr.Mpanza	T.	CR	Seaview
Mr.Mnyandu	M.	CR and Synod Delegate and PML	Chesterville
Ms.Jali	S.	CR	Chesterville
Mr.Mkhize	S.	CR	Othandweni
Ms.Mbongwe	K.	CR	Othandweni
Mr.Lukhele	S.T.	CR (preaching place)	Cato Crest
<b>Representative of Leagues and Committees</b>			
		PML (see above)	Parish
Ms.Phungula	T.	PWL and Sunday School	Parish
Ms.Luthuli	P.	YL	Parish
Ms.Khuzwayo	C.	YAL	Parish
Ms.Nxumalo	S.N.	IMbokodo	Parish
Ms.Zikhali	N.	Partnership	Parish
<b>Clergy</b>			
Rev.Dr.Lüdemann	J.	Parish Pastor	
Rev.Chetty	S.	Assistant Pastor	Focus: Seaview and Wentworth
Rev.Majola	C.M.	Self-supporting Pastor	Focus: Othandweni
Rev.Mkhathini	S.	Self-supporting Pastor	
Rev.von Fintel	F.	retired (but active) Pastor	
Furthermore, all congregational treasurers have been invited to attend Parish Council meetings.			

## 8. Membership Statistics

Proper statistics, which are regularly updated, are an ongoing challenge in Durban Central Parish. Forms for updating members contact details have been distributed, but regular updating needs to be improved. Apart from this challenge, congregations in the Parish – especially St. Michael's – experience a high fluctuation of members. On the one hand, students come and go, as they register or graduate, on the other hand new members arrive from rural areas or others leave due to retirement, job offers elsewhere, moving back „home“ to the rural areas, etc. Proper transfer procedures from and to other parishes are not always adhered to from the sending or receiving Parish concerned. Furthermore, „dual membership“ is an ongoing challenge. Many people working or studying in Durban and spending 90% of their time in Durban still want to stay connected to their „home“ Parish in the rural areas. Sometimes pastors of rural parishes pressurise members not to transfer, as the income of church dues is sorely needed in poor rural parishes. On the other hand, congregations such as St. Michael's, have a very small income base, if up to 70% of people attending the Sunday service are not officially members and do not contribute in any meaningful way to the finances of the congregation.

Total membership statistics of Durban Central Parish show only a very small increase from 2009 to 2011. While Sunday service attendance has actually increased – in some cases substantially - more reliable and up to date data from congregations has resulted in lapsed membership records to be reduced greatly.

### Membership statistics (January 2012)

Congregation	Confirmed members	Children	Total
St. Michael's	231	45	<b>276</b>
Lamontville	155	50	<b>205</b>
Wentworth	94	23	<b>117</b>
Chesterville	80	30	<b>110</b>
Seaview	90	30	<b>120</b>
Othandweni	60	39	<b>99</b>
Cato Crest (preaching place)	45	22	<b>67</b>
Estimated 2009	(760)	(228)	(988)
<b>Total</b>	<b>755</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>994</b>

## 9. Achievements

Who has achieved what in the Durban Central Parish? This is God's church – we are invited by Him to join in His mission of forgiveness, salvation and love to everyone – Lutherans and Non-Lutherans! Amongst the many workers in the vineyard I want to highlight the wonderful work done by the lay people of our Parish on all levels and in all areas of work. It is these faithful members, who do the main work of visiting the sick, preparing Parish League conferences, organising weekly prayers, preparing sermons, keeping the records – financial, statistics, minutes of meetings – up to date, cleaning church buildings, giving of their time and money, so that the work of God continues in so many ways. Of all the good work going on, achievements by God's grace, I only mention a few:

- a. Sunday Services are being held regularly in seven sites within our Parish with the help of **37 Lay preachers**. This is a great achievement and enables the pastors in the Parish to do their work in an enabling environment.
- b. Our **Youth League** is not only well organised on a Parish level, but has also excelled with their Choir, which has won competitions and – more importantly – has blessed many Sunday services with their singing throughout the Parish.
- c. The **Prayer Women's League** carries on being one of the pillars of congregational work – not only running the League, but assisting in many important ministries in the Parish. Their members are active in all areas of work, most notably Sunday School and Confirmation Class Teaching, Help Desk activities and visitation of the sick and bereaved.
- d. The **Finances** of our Parish are a reason to be thankful. Although challenges are always there, we are grateful to many members in all congregations who faithfully support the church financially. This enabled us to fulfill our obligation towards the Circuit fully.
- e. The completion of Phase One of the Church **building process in Chesterville** is a huge boost to the congregation, which is now seeing an increase in Sunday service attendance. A special achievement is the financial contribution from all congregations as well as the Parish as a whole towards the building costs – a wonderful sign of solidarity within the Parish.
- f. The **renovations in Lamontville and St. Michael's** church buildings respectively have been undertaken in the past years and the results are wonderful and for all to see. Generous donations by individuals, Leagues (in Lamontville IMbokodo paid for the tarring of most of the church yard) and congregants made this possible. Through donations from abroad, a proper audio-visual system was installed in St. Michael's and members are currently contributing towards buying further new church benches.
- g. The formation of the **Help Desk** in our Parish has been strongly supported by members of the PWL and the fruits of this work are visible in several outreach initiatives. The funds for the help, that is given to those in need, are donated by individuals or come from Congregational or League Coffers. The Help desk is successful in coordinating efforts of quick interventions in case of extreme poverty, sickness, etc.
- h. The student outreach work (**ELCSASO**) is growing at UKZN (Howard Campus) and DUT (Steve Biko Campus).<sup>4</sup> Students face many challenges (financial and academic challenges, relationship issues, loneliness) and temptations and ELCSASO is a forum for them to meet, encourage one another and celebrate their faith and a sign, that their church is looking out for them. This work is not linked structurally to Durban Central Parish, although most students attend services at St. Michael's because of its location.
- i. The partnership between St. Michael's and Durban Evangelical Lutheran Parish (ELCSA-NT; Umbilo) has led to the formation of a coordinating committee called „**Lutherans Uniting in Action**“ (**LUA**). The aim is to provide areas of interaction and cooperation of Lutherans from these cooperation, working – in small steps – towards the long-term goal of unifying the two churches. Joint services, joint Lenten devotions, joint attendance of workshops run by the NGO „Healing of Memories“<sup>5</sup> are just some of the achievements of this committee. LUA also hosts two volunteers from Germany and Durban Central Parish hosts another volunteer from America. All of these volunteers work in partner-NGOs (iCare<sup>6</sup> – Street Kid Organisation and Children Care Centre<sup>7</sup> – Creche for Refugee kids in the Point Road Area) and attend Parish activities throughout the year.
- j. In order to address matters pertinent to many members, the Breakfast series „**Food for Thought**“ was launched. A speaker is invited to address a certain profession (for instance health care workers) and its challenges, while members of the congregations – whether of that specific profession or not – attend. Two successful break-

<sup>4</sup> See also the Facebook Groups „ELCSASO DUT“ and „ELCSASO-UKZN HOWARD CAMPUS“

<sup>5</sup> [www.healing-memories.org](http://www.healing-memories.org)

<sup>6</sup> [www.icare.co.za](http://www.icare.co.za)

<sup>7</sup> [www.childrencarecentre.co.za](http://www.childrencarecentre.co.za)

fast fundraisers have been held in this way – focusing on Educators and Health Care Workers respectively. Judging from the support, it is clear, that topic-driven functions are in demand, as members strive to live as active christians at their workplaces.

- k. On the whole, the good **Administration of the Parish** has been an achievement, dependant on many individuals investing time and resources, to keep the Parish administration on a sound footing. Modern communication methods are used increasingly (e-mail, sms) and this will have to be done even more so in future to minimise costs and increase efficiency.
- l. **Christian Education Workshops** for Sunday School and Confirmation Class Teachers have been held in the past years – not only to train teachers on the new curriculum and material from LUCSA, but also to provide a platform to share experiences, learn from one another and to encourage one another, as well as to give the pastors a feedback on work being done and to propose necessary changes.
- m. The **Parish Council** has grown to operate as a team, which views the organisation of the work in the Parish as a team process, to which each one has to contribute. This has helped to strengthen lay people and helped them to „own the processes“ in their church. A step in this direction has also been the implementation of the Amended ELCSA Constitution, esp. the election of a lay person as chairperson of the Parish Council, which has turned out to be very successful.
- n. The strengthening of our **partnership** ties to Buer Congregation<sup>8</sup> in Melle Circuit in Germany was achieved through a visit of six members of Durban Central Parish to Germany in May 2011. This visit was new in the way that the all members of the group paid their own flight and visa costs and where then hosted wonderfully by our partners in Buer. Their visit included attending the 5-day „Kirchentag“ in Dresden and a stopover visit at the ELM/Hermannsburg Mission<sup>9</sup> Headquarters in Hermannsburg/Germany.

## 10. Spiritual Life

To report separately on the spiritual life of the Parish is a challenge, as all areas of work are inter-connected and can be deemed „spiritual“. The financial report reflects the spiritual life in the Parish, as does the commitment of lay people in working in all spheres. Diligently providing financial reports is a fruit of a mature spirituality, as it shows, that the person taking time to compile these reports, uses his God-given gifts to serve Him. Whether these gifts are to witness (ukufakaza) at a revival service (imvuselelo) or to fill in an Excel-Form for a financial report makes no difference. The source of this service (ukuzinikela) is the same: Members have realised, that they are God's children, that He has blessed them richly in different ways, and that it is a privilege to serve Him in whichever way.

An important part of the spiritual life of congregants is to seek counseling from the Pastor. Spiritual life does not only mean showing the fruits of the spirit, but also means watering the plant and mending it, where necessary. A growing number of individuals and young couples come to the pastors for counseling. This is a work, that is mostly not visible to the majority of members, as it happens in the confidentiality between the Pastor and those seeking advice or a listening ear or comfort. Seeking counseling is not a sign of spiritual weakness, but rather of spiritual maturity, as one tends to ones own wounded soul and spirit, when seeking support of a fellow christian like the Pastor.

Revivals are a frequent feature in the programs especially of League Conferences. One can note, that especially the Youth League uses this kind of expression of faith and worship (imvuselelo) frequently and it is impressive, how young christians are encouraged to bear witness of their faith (ukufakaza) in front of their peers. It is a blessing to see, that Youth, Women and Men are able to talk freely about their faith and God's blessing in their lives in these revival gatherings.

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<sup>8</sup> [www.martinibuer.de](http://www.martinibuer.de)

<sup>9</sup> [www.elm-mission.de](http://www.elm-mission.de)

Two challenges regarding the „spiritual life“ of congregants in the Parish should be mentioned:

a) There is a need for deeper interaction with the bible and its relevance for the everyday challenges people face. This could be addressed in two ways. On the one hand, bible study groups in each congregation are needed. Currently only a few of the congregations have regular bible study groups. On the other hand, the idea of establishing cell groups has been deliberated. In a workshop we listened to a presentation by members of a sister church about the success of cell groups (of not more than 10 members), which meet weekly, use bible study material prepared for lay people, and share their experiences and pray with one another. This might point to one possible solution to some of the spiritual needs of members.

b) The type of spirituality, which is lived out at some gatherings and revivals, shows, that a strong drive towards the spirituality of a either more charismatic or more high church nature can be observed. The challenge remains, to guide our youth and adults in such a way, that the church remains relevant to them and stays true to the fundamentals of Lutheran faith as well. The temptation of preaching a „prosperity gospel“ – where all material and physical ailments (no job, no money, HIV-infected, etc.) can be „prayed away“ – seem to be very real to many youth and the disappointment and disillusionment, if challenges remain, confuse and frustrate many. The Lutheran „theology of the cross“ – as also underlined in the opening remarks to this report, when talking about God’s power, which is made perfect in our weakness – teaches us, that God is near to us and blessing us, not only by saving us from all human despair (such as unemployment, sickness or poverty), but also by giving us renewed strength in the midst of these challenges, some of which might remain, as long as we live on this earth. If we are crucified on this earth – by sickness, domestic violence, hopelessness – then we are walking together with the crucified Christ, who rose from the dead, just as we shall rise one day. We pray for healing, for safe and happy families, for food on the table. We are challenged to actively work towards these goals. But we also pray for the spirit to make us witnesses of His love and salvation among the challenges we face, not only after we have overcome them. More teaching and possibly a more meditative form of spirituality might well complement the current expressions of spirituality (e.g. *invuselelo*) and help towards spiritual growth as well.

The „high church“ spirituality, with the increased use of different kinds of garments, incense, bells and other items and the increased role of acolytes has been often discussed in our church in the past twenty years. It is a phenomenon only really seen in the South-Eastern and Central Dioceses of ELCSA and is in part connected to the heritage of Swedish Missionaries and their customs in the past centuries. Many of the elements are by now well known and appreciated by church members. The challenge lies in instances, where acolytes, clergy’s garments, incense and bells cease to enhance the service, but become an attraction by themselves and rather distract from the message of the day or the words of the hymns sung at that time. The attitude and behaviour of acolytes at times needs further attention, but on a whole, this kind of service of the youth in our sunday service is a wonderful sign of broader participation of lay people in the conducting of the service.

## 11. Finance

„Money makes the world go round.“ Although as a church our main task is to preach the Good News of the salvation of mankind, it often seems, that this priority takes a back seat in Congregational and Parish Council Meetings and discussions about finances often dominate. It is clear, that talking about money in the church is not merely an administrative task, but also has a definite spiritual dimension.

Regarding the administration, it is clear, that the more transparent, complete and on time the financial reports of congregations and the Parish as a whole are presented to members, the more trust there is, that moneys are used in the



way they should be. Congregational Treasurers report monthly on congregational income, expenditure and account balance. A simple form has been developed for quarterly congregational financial reports to be sent to the Parish Treasurer and Parish Pastor. Congregational Treasurers attend workshops to become qualified for their work. Nevertheless, some congregations are still struggling to submit their quarterly reports. The Parish Treasurer reports monthly on the Parish Finances and provides an annual review as well. On the whole, the financial reporting seems to be working quite well in Durban Central Parish

Different forms of offering (ukunikela) to the church are used. The most common is the Sunday Collection, where members are encouraged to use personalised envelopes, so that their offering can be recorded in the „Yellow Book“, which is widely used in the congregations of the Parish. To encourage regular and consistent offerings, pledges have been encouraged, together with a pledge form to be filled out by the congregant. While some congregations use the pledge system with great success, covering their whole budget to the Parish with pledges, most congregations are still slow in picking up this way of offering. A small number of congregants has set up stop orders with their bank – this is the most convenient way of offering. An annual membership fee of R240,- has been set up by Parish Council from 2012 onwards (R60,- for scholars and pensioners can be considered if the whole amount is unaffordable to some members). League memberships will not be renewed, if the church membership has not been taken care of. Single members sometimes donate large amounts of money if a special occasion arises. Congregations also embark on fundraising initiatives to boost their coffers, as does the Parish (e.g. „Food for thought“ – Breakfast fundraisers).

The spiritual side of offerings has to be mentioned. In our church, tithing is encouraged as the appropriate way of offering, though only a very small minority actually follow this practice (otherwise our church would not be in the chronic financial crisis that it experiences). On the one hand, teaching on the actual practice of tithing is helpful. On the other hand, congregants have to be made to be part of the church – their spiritual needs have to be addressed in a relevant way, and they have to get the feeling, that their offering is being used in an appropriate way. This is an ongoing challenge for each Parish and requires more, than just the Pastor doing his job, but also in empowering congregants and Leagues to be actively involved in the spiritual life of the congregation – through bible sharing groups, music initiatives, sick visitation, revival evenings, etc. It would be unwise to merely see the offering as a payment for services that the Pastor renders himself – the congregants being mere passive spectators. This is not, what a Christian is called to do! The more actively congregants are involved in the life of their church – also the spiritual life – the more conscientiously they will bring their offerings.

<b>Congregation</b>	<b>Income 2011</b>	<b>Budget 2011</b>	<b>% of Budget paid</b>
St.Michael's	101.430	101.430	100%
Lamontville	84.600	88.830	95%
Wentworth	54.960	57.960	95%
Chesterville	31.300	57.960	54%
Seaview	57.200	57.960	99%
Othandweni	49.980	57.960	86%
Cato Crest	12.000	12.000	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>391.470</b>	<b>434.100</b>	<b>90%</b>

The income figures for 2011 are not yet 100% confirmed as the final calculations are not yet completed. Nevertheless we are grateful, that 5 out of 7 congregations have covered 95-100% of their budget to the Parish, with another covering 85%. This happens in spite of the hardships of many members in a difficult economic environment. Ches-

terville is the exception and an improvement will have to be seen in the offerings of this congregation, which has completed Phase one of their church building project, which has enabled them to move out of a school classroom to their own building.

Regarding our contributions to the Circuit, we are thankful to be able to again fully fulfill our budgetary requirements to the Circuit: 101% of the budget was paid to the Circuit coffers in 2011 – an amount of R202.412,- (R2.027,- over budget). It is appreciated, that the financial reports by the Circuit give a picture, of how money is being used at that level. Regarding 2011 Circuit Rally contribution (Insika), Durban Central Parish managed to collect R14.867,10 and obtained the 2nd position in the Circuit after Durban South.

## 12. Challenges and Solutions

Although several challenges have already been mentioned in the paragraphs above, the following brief list of challenges gives an indication, in which areas the Parish work needs improvement:

- a) Striving for an adequate response to multiculturalism and multilingualism: This is an ongoing challenge, as we strive towards „unity in diversity“. The different structure of church work in english speaking congregations (e.g. no Leagues, but rather groups with less hierarchy and committees), the different kind of spirituality (high church liturgical elements are less followed here) will have to be seen as an equally valid expression of Lutheran faith in ELCSA next to the predominant „way of doing things“ in isiZulu-speaking congregations and parishes. We have to continue to go the sometimes tiring route of finding common ground in Parish and Circuit activities, so that members of english-speaking congregations and parishes can also feel at home in the wider church. On the other hand english-speaking congregations must also be challenged not to „totally retreat“ into their own world, but to open up to some practices of isiZulu-speaking congregations. This „give and take“ –approach will make Circuit Activities more successfull in terms of participation of all cultures.
- b) Avoiding overburdened office-bearers is an important consideration in the election process currently underway. Too often a few dedicated members carry „too many hats“ and become overworked and frustrated after time. This is not how God wants His work to be done – and it encourages those, who are not involved in any responsibilities as yet, to sit back and let the diligent members overwork themselves and develop „church stress“. Identifying requisite skills among church members who are without portfolio and delegating work to them is a first step.
- c) The lack of church buildings/ facilities for sunday school/ confirmation class is especially worrying at Othandweni Congregation and Cato Crest Preaching place. St.Michael's is totally cramped and urgently needs more rooms for Sunday school and other activities. The obvious challenge is the lack of finance, but proper financial planning and setting up a building schedule together with sourcing other funding will go a long way towards realising the goal of having adequate space.
- d) The new LUCSA<sup>10</sup> confirmation class syllabus has been found to be too lengthy for the usual one year of confirmation class we currently teach. Either workshop days, or to lengthen the teaching time to 1 ½ years might be helpful. Furthermore a translation of the material into isiZulu would be helpful.
- e) The lack of bible study groups in each congregation needs attention. Sourcing good bible study material, which can be used by lay people is one solution.
- f) A constant challenge lies in the church providing an adequate response to burning issues in our society, e.g.:
  - unemployment
  - dysfunctional families/ domestic violence
  - teenage pregnancies/ children born out of wedlock/ drug abuse/ mental sickness/ suicidal tendencies

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<sup>10</sup> [www.lucsa.org](http://www.lucsa.org)

- inequality – social cohesion – racism
  - lack of selfconfidence, poor education
  - widespread corruption and a lack of moral fibre in society
- g) Although some of these topics are sometimes adressed in sermons or at Parish League conferences, it seems, that much more needs to be done in this field – through inviting relevant guest speakers, by using relevant resource material, and partnering with relevant organisations such as Diakonia<sup>11</sup>, etc.
- h) Further coordination of social outreach work in our Parish is needed. Experience has shown, that the NGO „PUSH Project“ is no longer an attractive vehicle for members to commit to social outreach work. A bakery project by PUSH in Lamontville has never gotten off the ground, due to a lack of proper markets for selling bread and the lack of a proper business plan. On the other hand the work of the Help Desk has progressed well, so that plans are afoot to incorporate PUSH and its assets into the Help Desk.
- i) Although we are officially hosting 3 volunteers from abroad, there is a need to further integrate them into our congregations. Currently a stronger link to the fortnightly meetings of the Wentworth Youth Group as well as the attendance of weekly ELCSASO meetings at UKZN Howard Campus helps to build relationships, but a roster for congregation members inviting one of the volunteers for a meal would be helpful.
- j) The ground-breaking work of LUA still needs much more support from ordinary congregation members. LUAs work needs to be showcased more in the congregations. Interactions on a music level (Youth League Choir and Brass Band) are planned.
- k) Generally, there is a need for Christian Education on all levels of church work. Teaching members on the basics of christian faith and its impact on current social and socio-economic challenges, biblical knowledge, ethics and History and Presence of Lutheranism amongst others is sorely needed – maybe in the form of an „Adult Sunday School“.

### 13. Analysis

Durban Central Parish features many of the characteristics of our wonderful country South Africa – with its beauty and challenges. The wonderful diversity of cultures and languages and the lack of interest to sometimes leave one’s own comfort zone – the exciting and the *destructive* side of urbanisation – the compassion for one another and *domestic violence* – spiritual richness and *scores of children born out of wedlock* - adoption of new technologies and social networking and *alcohol and substance abuse*. As so often in life, life-giving and harmful situations, environments and practices closely co-exist. The challenge for the church in Durban Central Parish remains, to rejoice/renew/reach out on the basis of God’s love for all in the midst of the destructive influences.

To remain true to God’s calling to us, as a church we must be open to embrace new ways – new music, new ways of conducting our services, new ways to teach one another, new ways to create a spiritual home for everyone, new ways for members from different cultures to interact within our Parish and with other churches. All this can only happen, if members are well grounded in their faith and do not timidly have to cling to a particular „way of doing things in our church“. Church and service traditions are only good and helpful if they serve to promote the growth of God’s kingdom among us here in Durban. If traditions keep people away from Sunday Services or League Meetings, then they hinder God’s work. If traditions lead to a congregation to exclude members of a different culture, then these traditions must be either explained and adapted to be more inclusive or they must be seen as divisive and should be replaced.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.diakonia.org.za](http://www.diakonia.org.za)

As an ever reforming church (as Luther says, the church should be – ecclesia semper reformanda), new types of church gatherings must be tested, to see, whether they are helpful for the spiritual life of the church and all its members from children to the elderly (e.g. congregational festivals, cell groups, family Sundays, professional groupings – like Health-Care Workers Breakfast). Some of these initiatives have been successfully established in Durban Central Parish, others still need to be tried out seriously.

#### 14. Recommendations

- Continuously empower church members through workshops (Sunday school and confirmation class teachers, lay preachers, treasurers, secretaries, etc.).
- Groom future leaders by including the Youth in all spheres of church life and administration.
- Try out new forms of services and church gatherings (see above)
- Provide suitable Bible study and cell group meeting material
- In all work to be mindful of the multicultural reality of people in the area in which our church serves – unity in diversity
- Strengthen the work with other churches (ELCSA-NT), NGOs (Children Care Centre, etc.) and organisations (Diakonia) for mutual support and to learn from one another
- Strengthen the administration of the Help Desk

#### 15. Conclusion

I thank all the congregants who use their time and gifts to serve the Lord so wonderfully in many different ways in our Parish. I applaud the Parish council and the congregational councils for the good work done and for the good spirit in which the members worked together throughout the past year. I thank the dedicated team of pastors for their time and dedication in following their calling to serve the Lord and for the good team spirit amongst us. I am grateful to the ELM/Hermannsburg Mission for offering me the opportunity to work in their Partner Church ELCSA. I thank the ELCSA-SED, its Bishops, Deans, my colleagues – the pastors, and especially the congregants for receiving me with open arms in 2002 and for being my home for the past 10 years. I thank our gracious God for the privilege of serving Him in this exciting and diverse urban Durban Central Parish and look forward to more to come!

Respectfully submitted

By

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