

ESTABLISHMENT OF ELCSA

In 1975, the churches that had grown out of the work of the mission societies, united in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). With its approximately 650,000 members it is the largest Lutheran church in Southern Africa. It is divided into seven dioceses, each with a bishop as spiritual leader. These are: Botswana Diocese (Bishop G. Eksteen, Gaborone), Cape Orange Diocese (Bishop A. Fortuin, as from 26 January 2003 Bishop M. Assur, Kimberley), Western Diocese (Bishop D.P. Ramokoka, as from 12 January 2003 Bishop M.M. Dithlale, Thlabane), Central Diocese (Bishop N.P. Phaswana, Roodepoort), Northern Diocese (Bishop C.M. Molefe, Polokwane), Eastern Diocese (Bishop J.B. Magagula, Mbabane), and South Eastern Diocese (Bishop L.A. Sibiya, Mapumulo). The Presiding Bishop of ELCSA is elected by the General Assembly for a period of six years. The present incumbent is Bishop L.A. Sibiya.

The affairs of the dioceses are run by diocesan councils, and the diocesan synods meet every two years. The dioceses are divided into circuits, each with a dean, and the circuits consist of parishes each encompassing a number of local congregations. The common language is English, but at the congregational level the local language is used.

The head office of ELCSA is situated in Bonaero Park, Gauteng, sharing the same building with ELCSA (N-T), UELCSA, and LUCSA. The present general secretary of ELCSA is Rev. T.M. Makgato.

CO-OPERATIVE STRUCTURES

Co-operation between the different Lutheran churches in the region, including the Moravians, was organised through the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa (FELCSA), founded in 1966. This body was followed in 1991 by the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) whose membership of 14 churches and more than 1,6m members includes the Lutheran churches in South Africa, and the Moravian Church, and extends to Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Angola and Mocambique.

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

Close co-operation on a practical level between UELCSA and ELCSA exists in terms of theological training, through the joint South African Lutheran Theological Training Trust (SALTTT).

Information provided by Bishop N Rohwer and Prof R Ottermann