

REPORT ON THE MISSION TRIP TO MIDDELBURG



April 22 – May 2,
2013

Seth Hinz, Rev. William Wangelin, Rev. Micah Greiner

This purpose of this reconnaissance mission trip was to record and document what God has done and is doing through the Lutheran ministries in Middelburg and South Africa. The team of three spent time with Rev. Dr. Mandla Khumalo and his congregation in Middelburg, and visited many of the Lutheran partners in the area. This report is a summary of our findings and recommendations for creating new partnerships with the LCMS Michigan District.

Thank you to the Michigan District, St. Peter Arlington Heights, IL, and Holy Cross, Jenison, MI, for supporting this trip. Our goal was to record and document what God has done and is doing through the Lutheran ministries in Middelburg and South Africa, and to share this with the Michigan District to see what mission partnerships might be established. To that end, we present this report on our mission trip to communicate what we observed, and pray that the Lord continues to bless the Lutheran churches of South Africa and the partnership with fellow believers in the United States. God is at work! Let's join Him on His mission.



Report on the Mission Trip to Middelburg

RECORDING AND DOCUMENTING WHAT GOD HAS DONE AND IS DOING
IN SOUTH AFRICA...

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TRIP ITINERARY

Mission Trip Participants: Rev. Micah Greiner (Lead Pastor, St. Peter Arlington Heights, IL), Rev. Bill Wangelin (Associate Pastor, Holy Cross Jenison, MI), Seth Hinz (Web Media Director, Michigan District Staff)

Monday, April 22, departed from Chicago O'Hare to Amsterdam.

Tuesday, April 23, arrival in Johannesburg via Amsterdam. Overnight at Pastor George Mabe's residence in Soweto.

Wednesday, April 24, tour of Soweto, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Sanctuary Ministries in Rustenburg, St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church in Siyabuswa, Overnight at Del Rosa Guest House, Middelburg.

Video Interview with George Mabe, pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran, Soweto

Video Interview with Mandla Khumalo at Sanctuary Ministries, Rustenburg

Video Interview with Esther Monamondi and Rev. Isaac Monamondi at Sanctuary Ministries, Rustenburg

Video Interview with Mduduzi, member of St. Peter, Siyabuswa

Thursday, April 25, tour of St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church, Middelburg, Bethel Preschool, and St. Peter Christian College.

Video Interview with Caring Friends members, including Elizabeth Mandonsela (director)

Video Interview with Sophie Mthethwa, director of Bethel Preschool

Video Interviews with teachers at St. Peter Christian College, incl. Maseko Beaula (principal)

Friday, April 26, Wangelin went with Mandla to airport in Johannesburg, Greiner and Hinz to St. Peter. Dinner with teachers at St. Peter Christian College

Saturday, April 27, attended the wedding of Muzi Khumalo and Dudu

Video Interview with Gerri Grant

Sunday, April 28, worshipped with St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church, Middelburg, attended Zulu traditional wedding at Khumalo residence.

Video Interview with Geoffrey Thokane

Monday, April 30, drove for Wittenberg via Songinvelo National Game Reserve.

Video Interview with Mandla Khumalo

Tuesday, May 1, toured Themba School, St. Peter Paul Lutheran Church in Luneburg, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Wittenberg.

Meeting with Dieter Schnackenburg, Helmut Paul, and Roland Johannes of the FELSISA

Wednesday, May 2, drove to Pretoria to tour the Lutheran Theological Seminary, toured St. Paul's Lutheran Church (FELSISA).

Meeting with Carl and Debra Rockrohr at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Pretoria

Meeting with Martin Paul, pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Pretoria (FELSISA)

Meeting with Tobias Ahlers, pastor at English Lutheran Fellowship, Pretoria (FELSISA)

OVERVIEW OF THE LUTHERAN BODIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The first Lutherans arrived in South Africa along with the early European settlers in Cape Town in 1665. Little happened until the arrival of Lutheran missionaries in the mid-1800's, when nine Lutheran mission societies were at work in SA. The Berlin Missionary Society sent Wilhelm Posselt in 1839. In 1854, the Hermannsburg Mission began sending both ordained missionaries and lay missionaries (colonists). This gave rise to both indigenous black congregations and also German congregations composed of missionary families and settlers. A split in the Hanoverian State Church in Germany gave rise to a split in the German congregations (Hermannsburg Synod / FELSISA) and German missions (Hermannsburg Mission / Bleckmar Mission).

International Lutheran Council (In fellowship with LCMS)

Free Evangelical Lutheran Synod of South Africa (FELSISA) – organized 1892

Composed of German Lutheran congregations, descendants of missionaries and colonists. 20 congregations. The oldest are rural, newer congregations are in the cities. Most FELSISA members speak German as their native language, although congregations have recently been organized that speak Afrikaans, English, and African languages. There are two black congregations who have recently joined FELSISA. Pastors are trained at the seminary in Oberursel, Germany. Bishop is Dieter Reinstorf.

Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA) – organized 1967

These are the congregations that were formed by the Hermannsburg Mission and later the Bleckmar Mission. All black African congregations. It includes many poor congregations. Reflects a diversity of African languages. Pastors are trained at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Pretoria. The former bishop was David Tswaedi. The current bishop is Dr. Wilhelm Weber.

Lutheran World Federation (In fellowship with ELCA and German State Church)

Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Africa (ELCSA) – organized 1975. The black mission church of the Hermannsburg Mission and other Lutheran mission societies.

Evangelical Lutheran Church of South Africa in Natal – Transvaal (ELCSA-NT) – organized 1964, the white German church of the Hermannsburg Mission. Along with the ECLSA-Cape it forms the UECLCSA (org. 1964). Together with ELCSA, they form the FELCSA (org. 1966).

Bapedi Lutheran Church – A black church that separated from the Berlin Mission Society in 1890.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ST. PETER CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, MIDDELBURG, SA

Pastor Mandla Khumalo is the founding pastor of St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church in Middelburg. Born in Belfast, South Africa, April 12, 1960, and raised in a nominally Roman Catholic family, he eventually joined the student resistance movements that fought against the Apartheid Government, especially as a result of the student uprising in 1976. While hiding out from police in a church building, Mandla attended a worship service and underwent a spiritual transformation. He returned to Middelburg, renounced his ties to the resistance movement, and began to preach the Gospel. He attended the Southern African School of Theology for four years, graduating from their Bible Study Course in 1981. He preached on street corners, in homes, and under a tree. He lived in Middelburg, a town with a current population of nearly 50,000, about 2 hours from Johannesburg.

In 1986, Khumalo was selected to attend the “International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists” hosted by the Billy Graham Evangelism Association in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in July 1986. There he had lunch with Pastor Rick Leinberger from St. Peter Lutheran Church (LCMS), Arlington Heights, Illinois. They exchanged addresses and Leinberger invited Khumalo to the Evangelism Explosion Conference at St. Peter in November 1986. He returned to Arlington Heights in November 1987, and preparations were made for Mandla to study at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. His studies began in June, 1988, and were completed in July 1989 when Mandla returned for a vicarage through the LCSA. In August 5, 1989, Mandla gathered his partner pastors and formed the Confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa. His congregation (previously Assemblies of God) was reorganized as St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church, Middelburg.

St. Peter, Arlington Heights, has financially supported Mandla and the congregation for 25 years. With their financial support, the first church was built and dedicated in October, 1989 for \$24,000. The parsonage was purchased in 1990, along with an automobile for Mandla. The Center for Missionary Formation was started in 1991 to train men and women for missionary work in the church, and to train future pastors. Around that time St. Peter also started a preschool called Bethel Preschool. Support from Arlington Heights was also given for satellite congregations, including Rustenburg. In 2002, a church in Siyabuswa was built and dedicated. There are four church buildings, 20 congregations, and 10 preaching stations/house churches.

A grade school was opened in January, 2011, called St. Peter Christian College. This is one of the very first private schools to be built in a township. There are currently 225 students. St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church is a congregation passionately committed to the Great Commission, and actively serving their community in a variety of ways. They have maintained a radio ministry for a number of year. They have lively worship of 800-1,000 in attendance each Sunday, and have made dramatic improvements in their community while reaching out with the Gospel.



Mandla and Leinberger in 1991



St. Peter Interior, 2013



Bringing greetings from Michigan

MINISTRIES OF ST. PETER CONFSSIONAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN MIDDELBURG

Center for Missionary Formation

When Mandla returned from studies in the United States, he formed the Center for Missionary Formation to develop church leaders for pastoral, missionary, and church leadership roles in 1991. He wanted to develop people in the center who would be missionaries of various capacities. “Missions originate from God: He went out of his way to rescue man when he fell into sin. Jesus is the second great missionary – he came to serve. The center would create men and women who would reach the community. Luther said you cannot reach salvation, but you can teach what salvation is. We were not called to sit in comfy churches or air-conditioned offices.” (from Mandla) The center prepares people for specific ministries: prison, hospital, rural, Bible knowledge, pastors to lay a good foundation. Since 1991 over 50 people have gone through the center, including many leaders in the CLCSA. Dr. Eugene Bunkowski from Ft. Wayne and Dr. Waldo Werning are two notable Americans who provided guest instruction. Pastors from Arlington Heights have also occasionally taught classes. About 20 have been trained for pastoral ministry today through the center. For the pastoral candidates, the center was to bring them to a level of education suitable for admission to the LTS in Pretoria.

On our trip, we were able to discuss with Mandla the origins and purpose of the center, and we met Manqoba Zungu and Geoffrey Thokane, who studied at the center and then later the seminary in Pretoria. The center would be an opportunity for visiting clergy or academics to teach a brief 2-3 day course. This also makes Middelburg an important center for leadership development for the CLCSA and surrounding area.

Caring Friends

Middelburg is the epicenter of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The infection rate here is 43%. It's because there are jobs in Middelburg and the mining region, bringing foreign workers with diseases. They sometimes have girlfriends or even families here, and also families at home where they came from. There are affairs and prostitution. Mothers who are pregnant are untreated, even though it is possible to prevent children from contracting HIV from their mothers. STD's/ STI's, and TB are all spreading. Caring Friends was established in the 1990's and is a choir that sings educational songs about HIV/AIDS, STD's, and TB. They go to churches, schools, pubs!, and from door to door in the community. They educate, inform, uplift, share hope and the message of Jesus Christ. They develop a high spirit of caring – it's not about you, they say, it's about the community and the world. Their message is to be faithful to your wife, and if not to use a condom. Jesus is Lord! The director is Elizabeth Madonsela, and a very energetic member (and potential pastor, according to Mandla) is Aubrey Makobi. The group would like to record a CD some day, and possibly come to America.

We did personal interviews on video with the following Caring Friends participants: Lerato Mampuru, Gerald Mathibela, Sophie Nkosi, Valencia Makatelele, Kenneth Mabonani, Elizabeth

Madonsela (director), Aubrey Maboki. Perhaps a group could come to the US to sing on tour, or we could help them record their CD as a fund raiser / educational / health contribution. Because it is about community health, perhaps WheatRidge would be able to assist.



Caring Friends

Bethel Preschool at St. Peter CLCSA Middelburg

St. Peter Middelburg started a preschool about 20 years ago called Bethel. It currently has 325 kids enrolled, 0-5 years, and about 30 are on a waiting list. With the opening of St. Peter Christian College, parents are paying for their children to attend Bethel Preschool, even though there are some free public day care facilities in the area. This is because they know Bethel is a feeder system into St. Peter Christian College. There are 36-50 kids in a classroom. This is already too crowded! They have difficulty turning people away or asking them to pay more tuition, because they know the economic state of the families. Little kids meeting in the library due to lack of space. Sophie Mthethwa is the principle at Bethany for the last 15 years. There are 8 teachers, and a total of 14 on staff. Tuition is 300 RD per month (\$31), for 0-2 is 400 RD (\$42). It's a big deal that a private school is in the township. The preschool needs more classrooms, storage within the rooms, security – some things have been stolen, upgrade the teacher's education. They must be top notch. There are 25 preschools in the town, but there is a waiting list for Bethel, because students are excelling and receiving awards. It's an excellent education. They have chapel every Friday at 9 am. There are more challenges. The teachers need higher pay, and the income fluctuates so much because parents can't always pay on time. They definitely could use more space, and there is an empty piece of property next to the church/preschool that could possibly be purchased. Mandla is looking into it.

Mpilo Mabena is a little girl who is paralyzed from the waist down, no wheelchair, and just walks with her hands. They have welcomed her to show that all children are included. They really need a toddler play area. Example, 4 year olds have 47 kids in one class, 50 in the other. All children are served breakfast, mid morning snack, and lunch. For some students, this is their only meal. They had a new playground constructed last year.

The preschool needs to expand its facilities, with construction of more classrooms. They also need to raise tuition to make the school more self-sustaining. If the property next to the church could be purchased, this would provide a great opportunity for expanding the preschool and church complex.

Children at Bethel



Bethel Schoolyard



Children at Bethel



Mpilo Mabena

St. Peter Christian College in Middelburg

This grade school opened January 11, 2011, and serves grades R (Kindergarten) - 6. They are trying to make this and Bethel preschool the two most powerful schools in the township. There are currently in 2013 9 staff, 15 teachers, 15 aftercare workers, and 251 students. Beaula Maseko is the principle. They would like to eventually go to R-9 general education training. In 2010 Pastor Khumalo sat down with parents from the congregation and from Bethel preschool. He approached Beaula, who had been a member at the church for over 10 years and worked for the Department of Education. There are free schools surrounding St. Peter – so how could they be different? This year there are 251 kids, next year 350 if they can build the next phase. The kids are excited to come to school – something good is happening here. They had a food drive to support the community, and the community appreciates the school. There is good prayer support between this school and supporters at St. Peter, Arlington Heights. Their choir entered a music competition and won #1 locally, #1 regionally, #1 in the province of Mpumalanga, and did very well in the national competition. This brought great pride to the school and the community. This year they have 3 choirs.

The school is run by a School Governing Board, which is made up of primarily parents. They have a say in how the school is run, which can be tricky because, for example, they hardly ever vote to raise tuition, even if that is necessary to adequately pay teachers and keep the school solvent. There are four LCMS Missionary Teachers serving a 2-year term as GEO Missionaries at St. Peter Christian College: Nicole Decker, Emily Goddard, Marva Ludgood, Kristin Matasovsky. Coral Rose is also helping to coordinate support for LTS and logistics for the teachers in Middelburg. This has provided invaluable benefits for the school, because these teachers bring a high capacity for technology, education skills, and organization. They also are funded entirely through LCMS World Mission, and not by the school itself. They would like to continue to allow teachers from the LCMS to serve in this way. The system to organize this program is in place between St. Peter Christian College, Mike & Cindy Rodewald in Pretoria, and LCMS World Mission.



Newly built classrooms at St. Peter Christian College



Classroom at St. Peter Christian College



Beaula Maseko



Students of St. Peter

Projects Underway

When Mandla returned from his studies in Ft. Wayne, he envisioned a “one-stop church center,” with a church, school, orphanage, job training center, and elder home. Many of these have become realities, and some are works in progress:

St. Peter Foundation – a board to incorporate as a foundation is currently being assembled by Mandla. This would become the trustees of the property for St. Peter Christian College, and the school would pay rent to the Foundation. It would also allow other agencies, government and private, to contribute to the school without having to go through a congregation. Mandla and Micah Greiner are working on assembling a good representation of church, school, and community representatives.

Job Training Center – this is being built on the property of St. Peter Christian College. It is a large building with garage doors to train mechanics, technicians, manufacturers, and eventually expand to include a bakery and other businesses. They are seeking partnerships with corporations in the area that could come and help train the people in the program, and then provide jobs when the training is completed. This could be an excellent model for other churches in areas hit by exceedingly high rates of unemployment.

Agricultural Training Center – When Apartheid ended, there was a push for black ownership of farms, and yet there are none who can actually run the farms and keep them productive. Large amounts of farmland are now lying fallow. This has been a big problem that Mandla would like to address by starting the agricultural training center. There is a piece of property that St. Peter would like to purchase for this purpose. The property, 21 hectares (about 40 acres) could be purchased with funds from the Department of Agriculture, or the Land Bank, which finances property and you pay on an annual basis. It is about 25 km from Middelburg. It needs significant capital improvements. It could also serve as a laboratory farm, a camp to rent to outsiders seeking a retreat for youth groups, mission teams, etc. They would plant crops, garden, and raise animals. There are pens for chickens, cows, sheep, ostrich, and pigs. A key factor is good leadership – who can run and administer not only a working farm, but also run the education process. Mandla has one of the board members, Mr. Tlou, that he would like to see lead this project.

Orphanage & Elderly Home - One day Mandla hopes to develop a special kind of orphanage, that is different from traditional institutions. He envisions a “walk in center” for children. Orphanages have a stigma – “I’m excluded and put in a camp with people like me.” The alternative would be to not keep them in the orphanage, but put them in foster care, groom them for the community, teach them at school, have a chapel, spiritual formation. Other orphanages don’t have that spiritual component. The “walk in center” would be a resource for orphans, the foster families, and for supporting and resourcing them. Another vision is to have the “walk in center” for orphans linked to elderly folks who could have these kids as grandchildren, deriving joy from each other. Mandla learned this from the Lutheran Home in Frankenmuth – in their old age they should not be abandoned; it’s not a dumping place. It would be a home-like center.

Mandla continues to have great vision and passion for reaching the lost and ministering to the communities of South Africa. These projects have been many years in the making, but there are great opportunities to impact the region with the Gospel. There have also been many past attempts of mission work that have not succeeded, and Micah Greiner can give a list of those. Yet the Lord continues to bless the work of S. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church in Middelburg – and may he continue to do so!



Job Training Center under construction



Job Training Center



farm property

SATELLITE CONGREGATIONS

Mandla Khumalo is serious about evangelism and the growth of the church by planting new congregations. When he returned from Ft. Wayne in 1989, there were a handful of fellow pastors that Khumalo knew previously who joined him in forming the Confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa on August 5. These other pastors had congregations who became part of this association, and all of them began planting new churches. By 2007, there were 20 congregations, 10 preaching stations/house churches, and 16 other areas where they used garages or schools for worship services.

There are three main congregations:

Middelburg	Rev. Mandla Khumalo	1989	8 satellite congregations
Rustenburg/Phokeng	Rev. Isaac Monamondi	1989	7 satellite congregations
Siyabuswa	Pastor Geoffrey Thokane & Vicar Monqoba Zungu	1993	3 satellite congregations

Some of the satellite congregations have folded over the years, due to lack of leadership, and also because of doctrinal differences. New ones have also been planted. The congregations / satellite churches in 2007 were:

1. Middelburg (1989)
2. Rustenburg/Phokeng (1989)
3. Brits (1989)
4. Belfast (1989)
5. Chaneng (1989)
6. Doornkop (1992)
7. Witbank – Pr. Mokwena (1992)
8. Kwaggafontein (1992)
9. Rustenburg – P. Makauta (1995)
10. Nelspruit (1996)
11. Mafikeng (1999)
12. Paardekraal (2000)
13. Bethal (2002)
14. Witbank – P. Nkosi (2002)
15. Tsitsing (2004)
16. Siyabuswa (2004)
17. Mandadeni (2005)
18. Soweto (2006)
19. Witbank – P. Mpila (2006)

Rustenburg

The congregation in Rustenburg/Phokeng was started in the home of Esther Monamondi in 1970. Esther is like a mother to Mandla. One of her sons, Isaac Monamondi is the current pastor. The other son is a pastor in Malfiki. Then they built a building next to her home, the ruins of which are still there. They held conferences next to the home. Later, the king helped them build the current church about 10 years ago.

Mandla met Phillip Mtuli, the pastor who invited him to a service in Witbank in 1976, at a Christian student gathering. In 1989 when Mandla brought Mtuli on board at St. Peter, Mtuli gathered this congregation in Rustenburg. When it was time to expand, land was purchased by Middelburg and the St. Peter Arlington Heights Mission Commission. The land was then taken by the king. They chose another place, but this would be the site of the royal stadium (Royal Bafokeng Sports Palace) and the king took this land as well. He offered them the use of the stadium in return. The congregation worships 300-400 each Sunday. They have begun an addition to the church, funded completely by members of their congregation. It is a great expense for them, but there is much pride in accomplishing this. They would also like to begin a preschool for their community.

Rustenburg has felt slighted in recent years, due to the fact that so much money goes to Middelburg. Teams will also visit Rustenburg, but focus their support on Middelburg. They had several issues to work through. One was the constitution of the Confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa. Other was the funding of the general synod. Mandla wanted the money from the various member congregations to go to a central pot, where they would be distributed by the synod. Rustenburg also has a problem with writing and sending reports and written requests to Mandla. They have not given good reports, estimates, financial records, etc. Doctrinally, they also returning to their Assemblies of God roots, and have dropped the name "Lutheran." They changed from "St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church Rustenburg" to "Sanctuary Ministries."

Although somewhat reluctant, we did an interview with Isaac, and talked about the needs and challenges facing the congregation. We also interviewed his mother Esther, and took pictures of the house, the former church, and current sanctuary. We hope to have made a positive impression, and hopefully a gesture of good will on the part of Middelburg.



Siyabuswa

When Mandla was doing an evangelism rally in a Nelspruit in 1992, a group of young people from Siyabuswa attended. (the name Siyabuswa means in Endebeli “we are governed.”) A youth spoke with Mandla, and asked “do you have a church in Siyabuswa?” Mandla said “no, but we can start one.” About a month later, Mandla received a phone call from these youth, and young man and young woman meeting. “We’ve started a church,” they said. And the congregation was born. They first met in a nearby school and in homes. It grew quickly, and is largely composed of young people. Mandla designed the sanctuary. They went to the Mission Commission at St. Peter, Arlington Heights, and they supplied the funds. The church was built in 1993. They would like to open a preschool, and then a school. With the leaders here they could replicate the model in Middelburg.

Around 110 are worshipping in Siyabuswa. One of their first pastors died, the other had an argument with the church and left with several members. The 2nd pastor who left the church is talking about coming back, although Mandla is nervous about bringing him back with things are currently going so well. A 3rd pastor also left with some members. The church has been restructured and is now growing. Young people are taking a role in moving the church forward. The music is awesome. The right people have joined the church – God brings them here. They seek to be a Christ-centered church. The challenges are 1. poverty 2. Young people are unemployed – some regions are 60% unemployment. 3. Workers in Pretoria or JB leave the town very early in the morning, and arrive very late in the evening. It’s hard for them to be involved in the church outside of Sunday morning. Parents are gone working that whole day, and cannot be with their kids. That’s why they need job creation here, to strengthen families with local jobs.

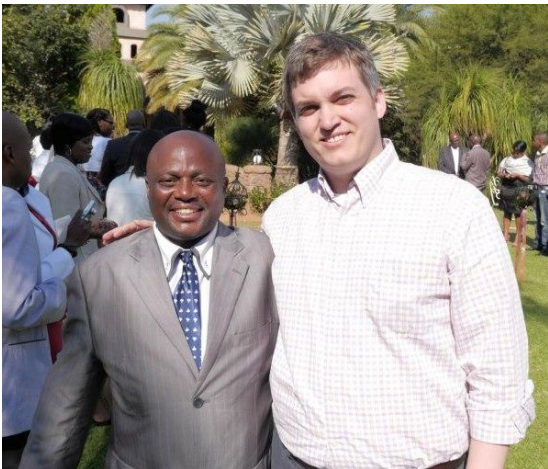
The current pastor is Geoffrey Skosane Tokane, the first student to graduate from the seminary in Pretoria. Manqoba Zungu and Mtuci Mkosi all went through the LTS, although Manqoba is going to finish his studies at the ELCSA seminary in Pietermaritzburg. Manqoba is also helping at Siyabuswa. Geoffrey did his vicarage here. One member of Siyabuswa is Mduduzi, which means “the comforter,” he is a student in grade 11, and is 21 years old. He is an enthusiastic member of the church. They bring in around \$1,000-\$1,500 RD a month. Geoffrey takes about 800 RD for himself. (living off of \$80 a month!) He is in serious need of a laptop.

We were invited to dinner with Gerry, a member of the church board at Siyabuswa, who also owns a gas station. He was a very friendly person and offered us great hospitality.

There is opportunity to begin a preschool at this church, and this seems to be the congregation with the closest ties to Middelburg. They have “St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church – Siyabuswa” on their sign, and have a commitment to the CLCSA. There is great opportunity here.



St. Peter Siyabuswa interior



Seth and Pastor Geoffrey Thokane



with Gerry, a church board member

PARTNER CHURCHES – LCSA AND FELSISA

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Soweto (Johannesburg)

Pastor George Mabe serves at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in the Diepfloof district of Soweto, the township outside of Johannesburg. Soweto has a population of around 1.5 million. He has served here since 1989. Emmanuel is the first black congregation in the FELSISA. About 4-5 years ago, he had a member in Fairland, a suburb of Johannesburg, who spoke to pastor Niebuhr at St. Paul about joining. They had been independent since 1992, when they had a dispute with the ELCSA bishop and became independent. September 23, 1992 was the first service after reorganization. He baptized 43 infants that day. He says when we go through difficulties, we are humbled, and God uses them to turn us to the right path. The church was still committed Lutheran. They started talking with the FELSISA and received an associate membership in 2010. They were very well received, and Mabe says it has been a perfect fit. During Apartheid, the only reason a black man would go into a white church was to clean after everyone had left. The congregation was organized in 1979 and currently worships 600-700 a Sunday. They have about 2,000 members officially. It is a blending of many of the groups that were kept separate during apartheid, and they worship in four languages simultaneously. The challenges in Mabe's congregation are unemployment, especially among the young, illness, poverty, uneducated sitting at home, they created a general fund to give funerals to church members. Having a proper funeral is important in their culture, and so the church fund is for any member to have a proper funeral.

Mabe drove us through Soweto and Vilakazi Street - the street where Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu grew up. We saw where the Freedom Charter was signed in 1956 that set the future for South Africa. On June 16, 1976, black students revolted against the Apartheid, and hundreds were killed. Hector Peterson was the first victim, and a photograph of him is memorialized in a monument. George remembers when the church would be accused of harboring terrorists. They would wake him up in the middle of the night, and say "Pastor, come out! We know you are harboring terrorists!" He would open the church and they would ransack it.

There are many converts to Islam in the area. They give money directly to converts, and also material goods. They are not convinced of the word. They are not believers – they are just bought.

George preaches in Spedi. Everyone responds in their own language – Tswana, Venda, etc. He preaches in a mix of Spedi and English.

St. Peter Arlington Heights has helped Mabe connect with Mandla, and the two have recently become friends. When Arlington Heights sent a mission team to do a VBS in Middelburg, they also traveled to Soweto and did the same VBS at Emmanuel. This is a healthy partnership to build on.

St. Peter Pauls Ev. Luth. Gemeinde zu Luneburg

The congregation is a charter member of the FELSISA, organized in 1869. The church was built in 1883 and used as a fortress during the Anglo-Boer war. Services are conducted in German only. The school is also conducted in German, and is a boarding school. Kids go home on the weekends.

There are four historic congregations of the FELSISA that operated Lutheran schools, and today still have schools associated with them. Kirchdorf, Ulzen, Wittenberg, and Luneburg. In the 1960's, the government took over all the church schools, and today they are technically on government property, located inside the property of the church. They still retain a close tie to the church, and religious instruction is Lutheran. They also retain the cultural aspects of the congregation. For example, the grade school in Luneburg is conducted in German, since that is the home language of the people who attend (German Lutherans in South Africa). In 2012, the first black students attended this German school.

The pastor is Dieter Schnackenberg. They also have a newly arrived vicar, Roland Johannes, who studied at the seminary in Oberursel, Germany. He and his wife Anna and son live in the vicarage. Schnackenberg said that there are 60,000 living in the area, and only 3,000 of them go to church, so there is a lot of work to do. The problem is not enough pastors. They are raising up lay devotion leaders, especially for the workers at the farms. The farmers themselves are starting to lead devotions with their workers. The lay devotion leaders are largely untrained, and need a way to get more training to divide Law & Gospel, etc.

The first step for their mission plan, according to Schnackenberg, is to give African pastors monthly support, much like a circuit gathering. The second step would be to reach out to the communities. One strategic plan is to build a crèche – preschool, every 2 years in each community, ideally establishing 16 preschools in the area. This would be a way to strengthen the church in this area. How would the preschool workers be trained? This is a big need – training and capital.



Evangelical Lutheran Gemeinde zu Wittenberg

Another charter congregation of the FELSISA was the German congregation in Bergen, established in 1884. During the Anglo-Boer war (1899-1902), the British fought the Dutch Boers near the congregations of the FELSISA. Although the German missionaries insisted they were neutral in the conflict, many German missionaries were interned in concentration camps, along with their women and children. During the war, over 30,000 farms were destroyed, and although about 6,000 Boer men died fighting, almost 28,000 Boer women and children died in the camps. The women and children of Luneburg and Bergen were also rounded up and interned. The church in Bergen was destroyed and today is a heap of rubble. When the war was over, the congregation members decided to reorganize further to the north, and founded the congregation of Wittenberg in 1902. For many reasons, the Boers in this region have a deep and lasting resentment of the British.

The church today is a beautiful oasis of German culture and Lutheran heritage. Services are in German only, although the school is conducted in Afrikaans. This congregation is made up of wealthy German farmers and business men, and they spare no expense in keeping up their beautiful facilities. They are also very supportive of missions. Their strong cultural identity highlights the complex dynamic between heritage and mission. Culture clashes, stereo types, and racial tensions have lingered.

The current pastor is Helmut Paul, who studied with Micah Greiner and Bill Wangelin in Oberursel, Germany, and also for a year at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He is a mission-minded pastor and a future leader of the FELSISA.



Themba Trust & School

The Themba Trust is composed of a board that originally purchased the property and started a boarding school for the rural African students, and also a rehabilitation clinic. It was originally the vision of a German pastor who was associated with the Bleckmar Mission. There are boys and girls campuses for dormitories (hostels). The boys school has been around for 28 years, and is primarily for rural children, but they are now drawing on a wide area. It's three main focuses are technical, agricultural, and science. Their passing rate is 100% since 1991 – that's an awesome success rate and a great achievement. At one time, the girls school and boys school were on separate campuses, but these have now been combined. The boys and girls schools themselves are now under government control. This has changed the direction of the school from that of the Themba Trust. There are still religion classes, and weekly chapel. The chaplain at the school is Nkosinathi, a LCSA pastor. The boys and girls schools are now consolidated on one campus. The board of Themba is looking into starting a private school. This could only happen if there was another campus for the now government-owned school to move to. There are 215 students currently. 195 students live on campus in the hostels. It is a grade 8-12 high school. The students go home quarterly and are instructed in English. The dormitories are run and operated by the Themba Trust. Some teachers serve as chaperones in the dorms. We interviewed Joseph – who is a teacher and also a director of the boys hostel. He is looking to develop more afterschool activities for the kids, including bee keeping. Also soccer, basketball, sports, gardening, etc. The Friends of Themba is an organization in Germany that sends significant support to the school/hostels. Pastor Dieter Schnackenburg of Luneburg, SA, a FELSISA pastor, serves on the board, and his wife works at the school. Other German South Africans serve on the board. Check out www.thembatrust.org and www.themba.info.

On our visit we met with Reinhild Niebuhr - the president of the Trust, Nkosinathi - the chaplain, Thomas Beneke – a FELSISA vicar doing a summer internship, the principle of the boys school, and other teachers and staff. We learned about the pitfalls of government partnerships, and how the board relates to the schools and property.



Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tswane/Pretoria (LTS)

The Lutheran Theological Seminary in Pretoria/Tswane is the training center for pastors in the LCSA and all of southern Africa. Along with the seminaries in Nigeria and Kenya, this is a central focus of confessional Lutheran education in Africa. The enrollment is around 30 students, with about 7 of them from the LCSA and the remaining from other regions of the continent. The rector of the seminar is Dr. Wilhelm Weber, who is also bishop of the LCSA.

Carl and Debra Rockrohr are currently serving as LCMS missionaries at the LTS. Carl served as professor at Concordia, Ann Arbor, from 2005-2011. He is an instructor at LTS and administrative support. Debra runs the deaconess program. We met with both of them during our visit.

The seminary does not charge students tuition, although it is expected that their sending churches support the seminary financially. This doesn't always happen, however, as in the case of 9 Liberians who came to South Africa, and then had no money for their flight, boarding, anything – and sadly had to be sent back. The fundraising committee of the LTS is currently working toward the goal of getting 30% of the seminary funding from South Africa. Currently it comes from the US and Germany (almost all of the partnership dollars granted to the LCSA go to the seminary). They are not allowed to run in the red legally, so they simply have to make cuts each year there is a short fall. A few years ago, the Rocky Mountain District and Southern Illinois District gave significant support, but those commitments have run their course. The Rockrohrs did not know how much it costs to educate a student.

Mandla has sent a handful of men through the seminary in Pretoria, including Geoffrey Thokane. Manquoba Zungu, however, has transferred out of LTS because it is not accredited, and he wants to continue studies at the ELCSA seminary in Paulpietersburg. This is disconcerting.

We asked Rockrohrs about accreditation. Carl has especially worked on establishing a partnership with the University of Pretoria, which is the Harvard or Yale of the African continent. They have an agreement, where, with just a few extra classes, the studies at LTS can be accepted and rolled over into a master's program through the University of Pretoria. Mandla noted that because the University of Pretoria is historically a Reformed faculty, some Lutherans may not want to have their degree from here.



The St. Phillip Mission Society in the US is the primary group who is financially supporting the seminary outside of the synod funding. They would be able to send monies over.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Pretoria

The main FELSISA congregation in Pretoria is St. Paul's, just down the street from the Lutheran Theological Seminary. This large congregation also ministers to over 100 youth & college students who come from FELSISA congregations and are studying in Pretoria. It is one of the few German speaking congregations in the city. The strong ministry to students is what keeps the FELSISA youth connected to their church, language, and culture. There is a separate congregation also called St. Paul's that worships in Afrikaans. These two congregations are served by separate pastors. The current pastor at German St. Paul's is Martin Paul, who studied with Bill Wangelin and Micah Greiner two years together in Oberursel and also at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.



RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING MICHIGAN DISTRICT INVOLVEMENT

1. **Support capital expansion of St. Peter Christian College** – Although Arlington Heights is a major contributor to the school, they are not able to keep up with the growth of the school, and could use another partner in helping build the next phase of buildings. This would bring the school through grade 9 and to 350 students.

2. **Direct missionary teachers to Middelburg** – possibly in conjunction with Concordia, Ann Arbor, as an internship or as a two-year mission track for graduates. The system set up by LCMS World Mission, working through Mike & Cindy Rodewald, seems to work well, and should be utilized.

3. **Connect Lutheran Schools in Michigan with Lutheran Schools in South Africa.** This could happen through technology, linking classrooms with fellow students on the other side of the world. Middelburg would be the first place to start this, perhaps with Lutheran schools in Michigan named “St. Peter” (Big Rapids, Hemlock, Macomb, etc.) and expand it to other schools. They could also adopt classrooms/teachers.

4. **Lutheran Preschool Initiative** – seek to start or enhance 20 Lutheran preschools in South Africa in the next 10 years. This would involve helping Bethel Preschool expand their facilities, start a preschool in Siyabuswa, support preschools of the LCSA (Bishop Tswaedi’s congregation especially), and eventually Dieter Schnackenburg’s vision for preschools in the Transvaal. There could also be trainers from the US who could come and train preschool workers and help develop policies and programs. The South African’s can’t build these preschools fast enough!

5. **Support the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Pretoria by directly supporting Carl and Debra Rockrohr.** This couple is invaluable to the seminary, and the seminary is invaluable to the Lutherans in southern Africa. The Rocky Mountain and Southern Illinois districts supported this seminary in the past, but their commitments have expired. The seminary needs to continue working on certification and accreditation.

6. **Bring Missionaries from Middelburg to Michigan.** There are several Christians who are passionate about sharing the Gospel that would be of great encouragement to Lutherans in Michigan who want to see the church revitalized. These include Aubrey Makobi, Geoffrey Thokane, Elizabeth Madonsela, and Mduduzu of Siyabuswa. The teachers at St. Peter Christian College were also outspoken Christians who would be encouraging to Lutheran teachers in Michigan. Mandla may have other recommendations.

7. **Theological Exchange through Conferences.** When the Michigan District holds theological conferences to strengthen the doctrinal unity of our fellowship, it could be possible through technology to include our partners in South Africa, and also to allow them to prepare papers for a cultural exchange of ideas. Khumalo’s address to the Michigan District Convention was well received, and a powerful testimony to the exchange of theology, missionary zeal, and evangelism enthusiasm that can be exchanged both ways.

8. Aids Orphans Scholarship. With the AIDS epidemic continuing, there will be countless children orphaned by this disease. Lutheran schools provide an opportunity for orphans to hear of the love of their heavenly Father and to be prepared for a life of service to the community. This scholarship could apply to Middelburg and a number of other Lutheran schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING FELLOWSHIP AGREEMENTS

1. **Recognize Partner Churches when Engaging Middelburg.** Any actions by LCMS individuals, congregations, or districts, is often perceived as the action of “the LCMS” by foreign partner churches. Our friends in the LCSA and FELSISA should be included when dealing with Middelburg, and also when visiting Middelburg. This strengthens our connection to the partner churches, and also builds on the relationships forming between Mandla and the other Lutheran church bodies in South Africa.
2. **Mandla sees himself more of a Missouri Synod pastor than a LCSA pastor.** There are certain customs of the LCSA, such as wearing uniforms to church on Sunday (a wide-spread custom in several denominations in South Africa), head coverings for women, and paying for Holy Communion, that Mandla has not adopted. In these regards, he is much closer to the LCMS and FELSISA than to the LCSA. Because he was sent as a representative of St. Peter, Arlington Heights (which is why, in fact, the church is St. Peter Middelburg – a ‘satellite campus’ of Arlington Heights), he can be viewed as having a de facto informal fellowship with the LCMS.
3. **There are significant connections with the LCSA.** When Mandla returned to South Africa from Ft. Wayne, he was ordained as a Lutheran pastor by Bishop David Tswaedi of the LCSA. Mandla has sent his students to the LTS, and when Geoffrey completed his studies, he was ordained a Lutheran pastor by Bishop Wilhelm Weber. On the LCSA website, they list St. Peter Middelburg among their congregations. There appears to be a tentative cooperation, and a delicate working partnership that has developed over the years. Mandla has admitted that in his younger years, he would have rocked the boat in the LCSA too much, and that as an older and wiser man, he is now ready to engage the boarder Lutheran community.
4. **Connecting Middelburg to SA Lutheran Partners is crucial to a post-Mandla transition.** St. Peter Middelburg now can rely on one man to lead the way (Mandla), but after him will need the support from a broader Lutheran community to train and develop leaders. The FELSISA and the LCSA also have a lot to gain from Mandla’s ministries in Middelburg, such as evangelism and mission strategies, community outreach techniques, and leadership development.
5. **Lead St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church through a process of doctrinal, missional, and constitutional strengthening,** to bring greater alignment to the organization, stability for the future, and a constitutional basis for talks with partner churches, including the LCMS. This process would have to be culturally conditioned and involve lay leaders.

OBSERVATIONS OF CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES

1. **Pastors and Status** – many black pastors feel the tension to demonstrate that pastors are important and influential people in the community by the clothes they wear, the car they drive, and where they live. The pastor should not be seen, in their minds, as poor, incapable, loosing, and helpless. They feel they would not have a hearing if people perceived that they were not worth listening to. Mandla's home and personal items are very comfortable, and quite comparable to any American pastor serving a congregation that worships 1,000 or more. This should not surprise visiting Americans. Pastor Monamondi also works for the government, since his congregation cannot support him. It is a nice job, and he drives a shiny BMW, even as many of his congregation members struggle with poverty. Rich and poor are side by side in South Africa. It's also difficult to attract men to the ministry if they think it is only a life of poverty.

2. **Race and racism are still part of the fabric of South African society**, although tremendous strides have been taken. Pigs are flying in South Africa! There is a black FELSISA congregation. Residents of Middelburg are sending their children to a school in the township. Black students are attending the German school in Luneburg. And yet South Africa still has a long way to go – it took the United States 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation to enact Civil Rights. Apartheid is only 20 years ago – and has lasting effects.

3. **Mandla is a thoroughly Lutheran pastor**, who is convinced of the Lutheran teaching of the Gospel. When he came back from Ft. Wayne to begin ministry as a Lutheran pastor, his previous ecclesiastical supervisor was his brother-in-law, who consequently had to fire him for converting to Lutheranism. Mandla still keeps in touch with many friends who do not share his Lutheran convictions, and this is a testimony to Mandla's sincerity. However, some of the pastors who joined him in ministry in 1989 were not as convinced of Lutheran doctrine, and are hesitant to be associated too closely with the Lutheran Church (e.g. Isaac Monamondi). Steps need to be taken to reach out to these pastors with both support for their ministry and also encouragement to adopt more Lutheran practices and customs. To that end, St. Peter and Mandla serve as a great example of how other Christians can discover the richness and treasure of the Lutheran Confessions.

ONGOING PROJECTS FROM THE MISSION TRIP

1. **Article for the Michigan in Touch**, sharing the trip with the Michigan District.
2. Ongoing collaboration with the **South Africa Mission Task Force** of the Michigan District to help develop partnerships with Middelburg.
3. Prezi Presentation available online at <http://prezi.com/oalsuyqmh7id/>
4. A **video series**, presenting finished video presentations of our interviews and overall report from the trip. These videos could serve as introductions to various ministries in Middelburg for a variety of partnerships.
5. History of St. Peter Confessional Lutheran Church, Middelburg, South Africa – an **article** to be submitted to the Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly.
6. **Commemorative History Booklet** (full color) for the 25th Anniversary of the Confessional Lutheran Church in South Africa, publish date 2014.