

## BISHOP'S CHARGE – DIOCESAN SYNOD 2017

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to our latest synod. The leaders of our Diocese have all worked prayerfully and conscientiously over the last two years to conceptualise those changes that are necessary, to solve problems, and to make it easier for you as clergy and lay leaders to make disciples of all nations in your communities.

I thank you for your attendance here. Beginning this evening, issues will be brought before you to discern where God is leading us and how we can best serve Christ's body, the church.

We have achieved many things since we last met as a result of the hard work of many in the Diocese. I owe them all our thanks because their contribution enables us to forge ahead.

I cannot mention everyone by name, but I wish to begin by thanking the Dean, Archdeacons and the Canons and their families. You are a wonderful group of people on whom I rely utterly. You have been open in saying what is on your hearts, and I know you have been loving older brothers and sisters to the clergy under your care.

I thank my priests and their families. It is not easy to be the church in these times, and many of you have been faithful in prayer, your work and dedication. I know I can still depend on you to do the job. I wish you the joy of Christ in all that you are doing in His name.

I am also grateful to the retired and the self-supporting clergy who do such valuable work in our parishes. Your calling goes deep, and your commitment is evident to all.

I know you would all join me in thanking the ordinary parishioners. Some of you are able to give more easily of your time, but others have had to make great sacrifices in order to represent their parish this weekend. But our congregations ARE the church, and you are representing our most valuable commodity – our parishioners. We must remember that we simply represent them here, and we all know that without these followers of Christ, we would not have a church. May the presence of Christ continue to be felt and seen in our communities through the devotion of your parishioners.

I must thank our office-bearers on the Trustees and the Diocesan Finance Board. They have all given of their time and expertise, and as a result I think we can say that the road ahead is a lot clearer than it was two years ago.

I must also thank the staff of the Diocesan office. Sibusiso Zungu is truly God's gift to us. What an example of dedication, commitment, and determination he is! I sincerely hope that he finds his work fulfilling, because we have all seen the hand of God in what he has done. I would appeal to all priests, parishes organisations and school officials to co-operate with the Diocese to make his work easier. We want him to love his job more and more! By the same token, I would like to thank all the support staff in the Diocesan office. Without you, our work would not get done. Thank you for all that you mean to us.

My gratitude is also due to those priests who take on extra responsibilities in addition to their parochial duties and the many lay volunteers who give us their free time so we can keep the larger Diocesan structures going. I have mentioned the Diocesan Finance Board and the Trustees, but I also include those who serve on the Welfare Committee, School for Ministries, the Publishers, legal advisors, organisations, schools, Synod Advisory Committee and many others.

I would like to say a big thank you once again to my personal assistant Tumi. Tumi goes from strength to strength and is developing her skills as well as getting to know the inner working of the Diocese (and the Province). She is a true professional, and we all depend on her for a lot. Tumi is also, truly, God's gift to us.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Liziwe, my daughters Onalerona and Bontle and my grandchildren. We have had a tough time recently, but we never gave up. Liziwe is the perfect ma-bishop and is supportive of me and our family. It is hard to do a job of being a bishop, and when I have a partner such as Liziwe, I know that God knew what he was doing when I fell in love with someone who has been God's servant in her own way, and with such love and dedication through all the years we have been married.

### **The Importance of the Diocese**

Given the context in which we meet as a diocese at this particular time in South Africa, it was suggested to me that I should read the Preamble to the liberal

constitution which we often brag about as a country. Speaking as it does about the injustices of the past, the need to honour those who suffered, and the need to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights, among other issues. It is undoubtedly something we should always value and remember. We should also remember, however, that it is a secular document. While many of its attributes are common to us as Christians, it is *not* our founding document as Christians.

What is critical is that we understand that the value of the diocese, its origin, being and task does *not* start with the particular founder/s, doctrine or practice of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, or the Anglican Communion.

It starts with God.

This diocese is God's gift to us. God loves this Diocese so much that God gave His only son, Jesus the Christ, so that we may be active Christians in this age in which we find ourselves.

We need to continue to build it up because it is God's will. In any discussion, in Ecclesiology, the Church should be solely based on God's work with God's people in the local parishes, organisations and schools. God the Creator, Jesus the Saviour and Holy Spirit the Guide continually builds the Church and does so by means of people. God builds God's Church because God brings about the coming of the Kingdom by the means of congregations. The purpose of the existence of this Diocese is of vital importance.

Our Ecclesiology should focus on parishes, organisations and schools which are the basic building blocks of our Diocese. Each building block exists for the sake of God, who created it. The purpose of each parish, school and organisation is to be in mission, in a given locality, at a given time, in a given situation.

We need to recognise that our calling as a Diocese is to understand that our mission is not our activity, but on behalf of and in obedience to God. We are included in God's mission. We therefore need to understand the identity, purpose and goal of our existence. We need to continue with a *functional Ecclesiology*. A *functional Ecclesiology* refers to the biblical concept of fellowship, witnessing, serving, liturgy, preaching, evangelism and pastoral care.

These Ecclesial functions must express real life: *Cura Vitae*, meaning: healing of life and to attend to the needs of individuals.

Over twenty years ago, God gave us a vision to “Achieve a shared vision and practice of the ministry of all believers”. This ministry means that every parishioner takes the responsibility of contributing in an effective way to the life of the faith community and to be an effective Christian presence and witness to the wider community.

### **Intentional Discipleship**

Baptism is seen as the key primary mark and sign of our Christian identity, allegiance and commitment to pattern our lives on the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus the Christ. Baptism is the foundation of all Christian ministry and that through baptism each follower of Jesus Christ is called into that ministry and the Holy Spirit gives the gifts necessary to carry it out. Baptism opens one to a particular way of living and will encourage all to bring varied gifts to the Body of Christ. It does not mean that all the baptised persons are automatically qualified. The growing process of membership means we enable all members to fulfil their God-given calling; thus

*“All the baptised are to be equipped to perform the ministries in accordance with their gifts and to give a reason for the hope that is within” (1 Peter 3:15).*

**All our members in our parishes, schools and organisations, who would respond faithfully to baptism deserve and need a continuous formation in the biblical story. This includes, mainly the faith of the Church, the way in which the values of God’s reign shape our living, the practice of prayer, as fellowship with God, the Churches worship and its call to serve the world.**

Our vision is in line with the Anglican Communion Vision of intentional Discipleship. An article given to me by the Revd Paul Siaki declares that, according to sociologists if any particular community is only 2% Christian, it has an effect on that community. 2% ? Christianity is the majority religion in this country, and Anglicans are one of the top five denominations numerically speaking. We therefore have the capacity to be hugely influential in our society.

**I want us now to concentrate on this vision of intentional discipleship because it calls us to be disciples in the context in which we find ourselves living.**

That is an immense challenge to every one of us here in this Diocese that spans the economic heartland of South Africa. Gauteng is the very soul of South Africa and one which poses as many challenges to us today as it did to our forebears as they sat in Synods such as this to confront the evils of apartheid.

What is this context? Put simply for us as Christians, it is deeply troubling.

On the one hand, we have to acknowledge that, as the Church, we achieved much in the struggle to overcome the demon of apartheid. On the other hand, we sat back, behaving like the lazy and timid third servant (Luke 19: 20ff), and thought that there was nothing more to be done when the new government came to power in 1994. We were tired; we were neglectful; we thought our time had come to relax.

But as disciples, we now face the consequences of that thinking. And these consequences are huge. Let me list just *some* that confront us right here in our Diocese:

- **State capture** is a wicked, omnipresent manifestation of greed, graft and corruption that has its roots in the highest official in this country, the President. The actions of some of our parishes in highlighting this after my call earlier this year were praiseworthy, but every parish needs to confront this insidious exploitation of our people.
- **The abuse of women** confronts us daily. Astonishingly, in the very month of women, our Church's month of compassion, a deputy minister had to resign for striking a woman, but another woman defended this deputy minister for doing this violence. Yet another woman, the wife of the Zimbabwean President, ran from her responsibility, back to her country after striking one of our women citizens. It is too terrible for words. But it is hardly surprising when one looks at the last SAPS annual report which noted that there were over 28 000 sexual offences against adult females, nearly 56 000 cases of serious assault against adult females, and 83 000 cases of common assault against adult females in South Africa reported in the financial year 2015/16. These are based only on cases that were reported to the police. As we all know, many cases go unreported. The vendetta against women in this country is a blot on our land.
- **Human trafficking.** Many of us sit back and think the age of human slavery, at least in South Africa, has gone. Not so. Human trafficking is not just sexual assault. Human trafficking is luring girls and boys of a tender age into situations which they are openly tempted to part with precious money

and leave their homes on the promise of work being available. On arrival at the “promised land”, they find nothing of substance – and the result is frequently a descent into performing sexual favours, forced marriages or working for a pittance or nothing, or even forced out of their country, as they find themselves alone, bereft and without the support of family. That’s modern-day slavery.

- The issue of discrimination against many **marginalised groups**, including women, the physically and mentally handicapped, and LGBTIQ groups, continues unabated. In respect of the latter, we, as a Church, still have much to answer for. To put it bluntly, there is still division about the rights of marginalised groups, but the question about what Jesus would have done is one that should exercise everyone’s mind here honestly. Jesus accepted us all as we are and we as a Diocese accept everyone.
- **Poverty** is rife. One needs look no further than outside the doors of this Cathedral and on the streets as you drive to Bishop Bavin School tomorrow morning. Look further and it is clear that this country is sitting on a powder keg of hopelessness. And who knows where and when that might explode? Don't take my word for it. As I was finalising this Charge, Stats SA released figures showing that between 2011 and 2015 the number of poverty stricken people increased by 53.2%. Two years ago, in 2015, more than half our population - 30.4 million people - were living in poverty. Those living in abject poverty, or what Stats SA calls extreme poverty, amounted to 13.8 million people: that is approximately one in every four people. It would be a brave person to suggest it is any better now, in 2017. The authorities seem unable to cope with this. How does Jesus call us to respond?
- There are many other matters within the context of which we minister, too many to detail. But let me put some of them on the table now, lest we forget: **family life, love relationships, marriage, crime, the suicide rate, unemployment, homelessness and housing.**
- But there remains one final issue I want to isolate at this juncture: **the naked sin of racism.** When the father of this nation, Nelson Mandela, took the reins of government in 1994, he initiated a process of reconciliation and of going out of his way to get people to live together in harmony and love. He was a true Christian in this respect.

Who can forget the sight of this man who spent 27 years in prison walking on to the rugby field – the bastion of white nationalism – at Ellis Park in 1995. *There* was a moment of reconciliation. There were many other such acts, not least as he embraced the very people who had imprisoned him and worked with them in government. But now, I doubt whether any of us could truly say that racism does not exist.

Just as we sat back immediately after 1994 as a Church, and trusted everyone else to do the work and to keep an eye on good governance, so we as the Church have allowed the dark shadow of the demon of racism to fall over the light of Christian harmony, goodwill, and love. My fellow Anglicans, we know it! It's in our midst.

Only a few weeks ago, one of our own schools, perhaps the best-known private school in this land, St John's College, paraded this naked sin for all to see. We were left wanting as a Diocese and as Christians.

Let's be realistic: Something like this could happen, anywhere, anytime, in any of our schools, organisations and, dare I say it, in any of our parishes.

I hear you wonder about the possibility of this occurring, but it is true – because we don't love enough, and we forget the lessons of our great forebears who dispelled the cancer of racism in their attempts to bring about that very love which Jesus commands us to apply. As our parishes also become more integrated with different races and, yes, different nationalities represented, the chances increase, and we must work hard to achieve true Christian fellowship.

There is an active bedfellow of **racism** in this land that I think simmers below the surface - **xenophobia**. All too easily do the tentacles of the secular, and especially the political world grip the soul of our parishes, and point at us as a church when we fail in this respect, and so in all our institutions we must create initiatives to ensure we reflect the inclusiveness of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Let me remind you of the words of one of the great hymns that we sing: "In Christ, there is no east or west – he breaks all barriers down: by Christ redeemed, by Christ possessed, in Christ we live as one."

## **The question is: Do we believe it?**

My dear fellow Disciples, our problem, in allowing these things to happen firstly, and secondly in not taking enough action to prepare for the possibility of them happening, is because we are not “fully possessed by Christ”. It is because of our sinful nature we look for the destructive differences rather than for our unity in Christ. As a Diocese, we cannot allow this to happen.

**My specific charge to each of you is to commit anew, and to work without ceasing to eradicate this naked sin of racism which has actively reared its demonic head.**

This is intentional discipleship in the world in which we are living.

I charge each parish, organisation and school to be intentional about Discipleship, and Disciple making. Let each disciple in our Diocese feel welcome and loved. Let the leadership constantly equip, affirm, encourage, appreciate so that we can grow God’s community of faithful disciples.

To be specific: I have cited more than a dozen issues that need ministry. Some parishes, schools and organisations have active outreaches that already deal with them. I applaud this work; we give much of the love of Jesus to the community.

We have in our journey together, come up with seven strategic objectives as part of our Diocesan implementation plan and this was premised on seven principles. In our different meetings we have discussed the make-up of all Diocesan structures, namely Chapter, Trustees and Diocesan Finance Board, and we include effective operations of the Diocesan Administration office and Archdeaconry Structures. In the past year emphasis was placed on formalising these structures and their roles and responsibilities.

Going forward, and with my Charge in mind, our focus will be on the support given to the parishes, organisations and schools by such structures. We need to continue training parishes on implementation of the Strategic Objectives, vigorous empowerment of clergy and leadership and aggressive campaign for committed volunteers. It is vital that we understand that parishes, schools and organisations are the *heartbeat* of the Diocese.

## Children and Young People

None of that which I have charged us to do a few minutes ago is sustainable without a definitive ministry with, for, and of **children and young people**. They have to be schooled in the history of our land and of the need to reject, in the strongest terms, any racist actions, no matter who they come from. Jesus was not racist. Jesus was not sexist - his ministry to women in a culture that demeaned them even more than we do tells us that.

In the preamble to the Diocesan Rules, we say that in order to achieve our vision, and practice of the ministry of all believers, we need vibrant Christian communities that lead to a deepening relationship with God, others, ourselves and creation. The spiritual growth and ministry of all believers is dependent on the active participation of young people and children, who are valued and encouraged. The Lambeth Conference of 1998 calls for the “*need to develop and strengthen models of adult catechetical practice ... which stress both God’s and the full demands of the gospel as (new believers) accept a new way of life*”.

The holistic formation of children and young people features prominently in the Anglican Communion text. Young people and children are for us in the Church, as they were for Jesus, the sign of the Kingdom of God among us. Their presence and ministry in the Church is essential for the whole family of God to be complete.

I thank God for all who are involved in children and young people’s ministries in our parishes, organisations and schools. Our Diocesan schools and organisations are doing their best to promote a Christian Ethos, and I praise them for their unique value to the community in fostering the holistic development of children and young people, given the education environment in which we find ourselves - despite the uncomfortable problems that I have spoken about and the tough challenges that confront them. I thank Sunday and day school teachers and youth leaders for advancing the Church’s teaching ministry to children and young people.

I have recently received emails from young people who feel excluded and marginalised by the Diocese. I assume that what they mean is that there is no Diocesan youth structure in place. I have been arguing since my ordination in our Diocese, that it is a futile exercise to form a Diocesan structure without a well-functioning young people's ministry in our parishes and our Archdeaconry

structures. Diocesan youth structures' main purpose should be to support, coordinate and monitor all children and young people's ministries in our parishes and Archdeaconries. Children and young people have the desire to be developed spiritually, to participate in local outreach, to visit the sick and attending small groups, where they can participate in bible study and prayer.

I therefore commit myself to give leadership in the Diocese, to ensure that our parishes, organisations and schools and our archdeaconries are safe, healthy and spiritually enriching communities for children and young people and are equipped for the service in the Church and society, in leadership skills and to exercise that leadership in the life and mission of our Diocese.

A further specific Charge is therefore obvious: I charge each parish, school and organisation to create an environment where our children and young people could find help. It is important that children and young people are dealt with as self-reliant participants in our parishes, schools and organisations of which they are an integral part. Young people need more than services with vibrant music, and youth services during Youth Month, but a "heart of the local priest, and parish council" and an embracing congregation. They simply want to be loved.

Today's reality is such that children and young people below age of 35 form the majority of the Anglican Communion, and in countries such as those in the Sub-Saharan Africa, over 60% of the population is below 35. So the importance of equipping and building the capacity of young people in society, and particularly in Church, must be much more than simply a matter for discussion. Make 2018 the Year of Children and the Young People and be intentional about incorporating them into the life of the Church. The scary thing is that, if we don't incorporate them in the life and love of Christ, someone else will take them into something which might be a lot more sinister.

### **Family Based Ministry**

Children's and young people's ministry cannot be separated from **family ministry**. Parents need support. Families in whatever format, play a very important role in the spiritual formation of children and young people. We should invest in family ministry and those systems where we are in partnership with the homes, schools and organisations to make disciples of our children and young people.

We live in a patriarchal society in which women get beaten up, earn low wages, and in which 52% of the unemployed aged between 15 and 64 years old are women. Yet one third (33.4%), or nearly 1.6 million households are headed by a woman. What this does to family life can only be imagined. As a Church that promotes family life, we need to recognise that families are in crisis. In modern times the family structure has collapsed. If we take into account the increase in divorce, and absenteeism from the family unit of one or more parents, young people and children are inevitably affected by this situation as they try to deal with their own crises.

It is important that each parish, organisation and school make sure that it supports and equips parents and families to cope with the demands of modern living. I am sure you will agree that all parents try their best and most children rise up and call them 'blessed', but there are those children who go wrong, and the Church needs to be there to assure them that their particular prodigals are in God's hands, and that no one is blaming them. They do not need our condemnation and being blamed for everything that happens in the lives of their children.

Earlier on I gave figures about some of the criminal acts that target women. The question must arise: how do we mentor our **young men**? Figures for our prison population are clear that most crimes are committed by men - only 2.6% of the prison population, according to the annual report of the Department of Correctional Services in 2015/16, were women.

It is clear from these figures that a huge ministry awaits our Diocese in particular, and the Church in general, especially to young men. It is estimated that 2.8 million males between the ages of 15 and 34 years are unemployed. This makes up 65% of the total number of males in South Africa are without any form of self-support or self-actualisation. This 65% comprises our young people!

What ministry does your parish, your School and organisation have to reach out to them? Are there Adult Christian disciples willing to help produce fine young men whose energies are spent fighting evil rather than perpetrating it? How are we protecting our women, and teaching them to protect themselves? Are we teaching good skills to both men and women, or are we condemning them when they have fallen, and making them feel they are unworthy of Church? I charge you to create a ministry in particular for the young men in our Diocese, a Diocese in which thousands of young men are pouring in their frantic search for work.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the work of all our women's organisations and groups in our Diocese. It is encouraging to see that numbers are growing, which is good. I however, want to call on leadership in the women's formations to listen to the pain and share the brokenness of women and children outside these forums. I also want to thank all organisations involved in men's formations. It is my hope that more time is spent, not only in prayer and fellowship, which is vital, but also in seeking out to assist young men who are struggling with their own identity.

## **Pastoral Guidelines**

In my last charge, I said no community can remain static. If it is a Jesus-led community, it will spread the gospel as a matter of course. Their inspiration will be the love of Christ, and they will accept everyone, irrespective of race, social status, sexual orientation, past history or nationality. The Kingdom of Heaven will be enriched by many, and all will be seen as God's gift to the world, to the country, to their community, and to their parish. As I indicated earlier, I want to say a bit more about the LGBTIQ issue. The Synod of Bishops has been requested by the Provincial Synod to provide pastoral guide lines for ministry to those who identify themselves as lesbians, gay, bi-sexual, transsexual, intersex, or questioning (LGBTIQ). The Synod of Bishops has been unable to do so. The Synod of Bishops requested the Archbishop to establish a commission and to appoint its members and provide it with specific terms of reference. Each Diocese was requested to send two representatives. I am pleased to say that Father Moses Thabethe and Ms Rosalie Manning (Deputy Provincial Registrar) attended the meeting of the commission. Please be praying and thinking rationally about this issue and be part of the dialogue so that we may have a meaningful conversation and give assurance to those who are the subject of these discussions. But also understand that in times of hardship, people are going to use all sorts of alternative spirituality to plead for the causes. Be patient with them. We need to know our teaching, but we cannot become exclusive if frightened people are grabbing at anything that will relieve their suffering.

## **Prophetic Relevance**

We need to take care of the world God has created for us - particularly our **environment**. The biblical approach to the environmental issue is to ask this basic question: to whom does the earth belong? It is deceptively elementary.

For how shall we reply? The first answer is straight forward. It is given in Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it". God is its creator and so by right of creation is also its owner. But this is only a partial answer. Here is Psalm 115:16; "The highest heavens belong to the Lord, the earth he has given to us"

So then, the balanced biblical answer to our question is that the earth belongs to God and to us. It belongs to God because God has made it- to us because God has given it to us. Our possession of the earth is leasehold, therefore not a freehold. We are only tenants God remains (in the most literal sense) 'the landlord', the Lord of all the land. We should strenuously avoid all wastefulness, not only out of solidarity with the poor, but also out of respect for the living environment.

I charge you as Synod representatives to make sure that all our Disciples in our Schools, parishes and organisations be made conscious of good care of the land. A prophetic Diocese will warn about the impending doom, and have training programmes in place so that people can learn to love this special gift, the Earth. A prophetic Church would speak about all social ills but also need to model good stewardship. We are stewards of all that has been given, and we express this by simply loving God's creation and not abusing it. If we do so this, we would be fulfilling our role of a Prophetic Church.

Let me conclude with my Call to Action.

As your Bishop, **I have three specific Charges to all parishes, schools and organisations:**

- First, I charge you to continue with the programmes you have that address some of the issues I have cited.
- Second, I recognise that it is impossible to deal with every one of the many challenges I have spelt out. But I charge each parish, school and organisation, to initiate an intentional ministry in at least three of the issues I have pointed out. One of these should be a programme that addresses the scourge of racism.
- Third, as your Bishop, I charge each parish, school and organisation, in the spirit of building our great fellowship of love, to report back annually to me, at the time of Vestry, and then to the next Diocesan Synod.

Finally, let me ask you to do few things during of this Synod

Let us subject ourselves to the Holy Spirit. You are intelligent, wise and creative and you are passionate about the things of God. I know that I love you for it. But it does not mean that you can have own agendas and want Synod to push them through. My humble plea is let each one take time to do three things; Listen, Listen, Listen. We work for the Church of Jesus Christ. Let us put our own desire a side.

Let us keep ourselves factual. Every single body has at its core, a skeleton. We have the skeleton of our Rules which gives us shape and structure. Let us use the intelligence and education God has given us, and think dispassionately about the various issues which we have to discuss.

Let us, most of all keep our goal in mind. We are here to engage one another, so that we can empower, enable and equip each of our parishes, schools and organisations to make Disciples who will go on to make Disciples, until Jesus returns, and the whole world will say, Jesus is Lord, and give God all the glory.

**Amen.**