

Synod of Bishops
23rd to 26th February 2021
Communiqué

Dear People of God,

Grace and Peace be with you!

The Synod of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa met, prayed, discussed, and shared together under the leadership of Archbishop Thabo, Archbishop of Cape Town, and Metropolitan of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

Due to the restrictions imposed on our various nations due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Synod of Bishops was held virtually. Notwithstanding the vagaries of technology and participants being occasionally disconnected, Synod was a success and the normal sense of collegiality enjoyed in our meetings was again evident.

The busy schedule centred around the daily offices and input from Mr Douglas Board, speaking from London, and Dr Annemarie Paulin-Campbell of the Jesuit Institute from Johannesburg. Their inputs on our Encounter with God, and our Spiritual Journey were deeply challenging and moving. Synod was inspired and empowered by their input, and deeply appreciative of the hard work put into their presentations.

Synod observed a moment of silence and offered prayers in memory of Bishop Ellinah Wamukoya who died recently from COVID-19 complications. She was a valued member of the Bench and will be greatly missed. May her soul rest in peace and rise in glory. Synod noted that the Archbishop of Canterbury has conferred, posthumously, the Langton Award for Community Service on Bishop Ellinah. The award, named after Stephen Langton (Archbishop of Canterbury in the 13th century), is made "for outstanding contributions to the community in accordance with the Church's teaching".

Synod of Bishops approved and gave authority under Article ii to dealing with Canon 4, Of the Election of Bishops, in the light of the lockdown restrictions imposed across all the countries of ACSA. This special resolution will permit the Archbishop to promulgate and hold Elective Assemblies, under special provisions, in those Dioceses currently without Episcopal leadership. The Elective Assemblies have twice been postponed due to lockdown restrictions, and it is imperative that we elect and consecrate episcopal leadership in these Dioceses. Synod expressed deep appreciation for the work of the Vicars-General who have served the Church so selflessly during this time of interregnum. Their ministry has gone above and beyond the call of duty.

Synod of Bishops gave further authority under Article ii on the holding of Vestries, Canon 27, that these may continue under the conditions approved by this Synod.

The motion approved at the last Provincial Standing Committee on Gender-Based Violence, and the need to increase the representation of women in positions of leadership in the local Church and the Province was endorsed. This important work was discussed in light of the serious threat posed by patriarchal dominance which seeks to destroy, often violently, the God-given ability of women and their call to leadership in the Church.

Synod of Bishops reflected on the challenges presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic. These included the economic and health issues before us. Time was spent exploring how we believe God is calling the church to minister and grow under these 'new-normal' circumstances.

Synod of Bishops noted the Provincial Synod to be held in September of this year, and the new date for the Lambeth Conference in 2022.

Synod was presented with the exciting and important developments within the Portuguese Speaking Dioceses of ACSA, which are to become a new Province in the Anglican Communion, named the Anglican Church of Angola and Mozambique (IAMA). This development is indicative of the growth within ACSA for which we give God the glory. During Synod news from the Anglican Communion Office was received that approval has been granted for this project to continue in its exploration and preparation. Final approval for the creation of this new Province is still to be granted, but an important first step has been successfully completed.

Professor Mary Metcalfe, speaking on behalf of a highly qualified team, presented a progress report on their investigation into racism in Anglican Schools. This is an ongoing investigation. The work completed thus far has set a precedent for a way of listening and beginning the work of addressing the removal of the pain and disabling effect of racism, which for so many has been a lifetime of experience. It is clear this is a process and cannot be quickly addressed.

Lay Canon Rosalie Manning addressed Synod on both the Safe and Inclusive Church and Human Sexuality Commissions. The importance of this work cannot be underestimated, and after discussion with the Bishops there was unanimous agreement that further work and training is required.

Synod noted the following with deep concern:

- The impact of the insurgency in Cabo Delgado within the Diocese of Nampula in the north-eastern part of Mozambique, leading to loss of life and trauma for those living under this threat; and

- [The deteriorating situation in the Tigray Province of Ethiopia.](#)

Synod expressed a unanimous desire that both these intolerable situations be addressed and resolved. Bishop Manuel Ernesto of Nampula was assured of our prayers at this time. The [statement on Tigray](#) published in the name of Archbishop Thabo was duly adopted. Synod also noted the damage inflicted on Mozambique by recent cyclones and assured the people of Mozambique of our prayers and support.

Several Bishops have been asked to stand in positions of leadership in both public and community life. Bishop Carlos of Lebombo chairs Mozambique's National Elections Commission; Bishop Charles of the Highveld is the chair of the Church Unity Commission. It was also reported that the Revd Dr Vicentia Kgabe, Principal of the College of the Transfiguration, was invited to join the Board of the Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC). Synod also congratulated Bishop William, Christ the King and Bishop Vicente, Niassa, as well as Bishop Moses Madywabe and Bishop Eddie Daniels, on the anniversaries of their Consecrations. The news that the Revd Thandeka Vikilahle has been appointed as the first woman Dean of Mthatha was received with great joy.

A commitment was made to rediscover the important role the South African Anglican Theological Commission (SAATC) plays in our prophetic leadership and witness to the world. Bishop Raphael of Saldanha Bay chairs this Commission. There is a need to source additional and younger members of the Commission, and for discussion to filter deeper into the ACSA.

Time was spent exploring the role and future development of education in our Church. This included discussion on the important role of the College of the Transfiguration (CoTT), noting that the changing dynamics caused by the Pandemic and lockdown will necessitate a prayerful and bold process of envisioning. A strong plea was made that we support CoTT and not lose this heritage of which we can be justifiably proud. Synod approved the creation of a committee to explore further the developments already under way concerning CoTT.

Discussion also ensued on the role our Anglican Schools play in the life of the Diocese, the Church and South Africa. These schools play an important part in the life of the church and require our full support. Synod noted that the position of Executive Director of the Anglican Board of Education (ABE) is being advertised due to the contract with the Revd Roger Cameron having concluded. Synod expressed grateful appreciation for the sterling work and ministry of the Revd Roger Cameron. Synod agreed he would be made an Honorary Canon of the Province.

Synod of Bishops received a report from Bishop Dintoe, Free State, on our young people. Great appreciation was expressed for their leadership and life within the church and assured them of the support of the Bench of Bishops, and of our

desire to see them assume their rightful place in the life of the church as an investment for our future and as an asset at this time.

Synod of Bishops discussed the issues around the motion from Provincial Synod giving the ACSA's support for Palestine. A group appointed by the Archbishop has endeavoured to listen to both sides of the debate and has agreed to continue offering support to the people of Palestine in the light of the oppression and restrictions imposed upon them. The similarities with Apartheid cannot be ignored. Neither can we ignore that Scripture is used to condone this oppression. The use of Scripture challenges both the gospel and the church to address this issue in the light of Christ. In this we note the motion did not support the use of violence on either side of this conflict. Synod takes this matter seriously and has asked the Archbishop to bring it before Lambeth 2022.

Synod of Bishops gave their approval of a petition questioning the granting of permission for fracking in the Kavango Region of Namibia. The probability of environmental degradation occurring due to fracking is too great to ignore and must be carefully investigated before permission is granted. Synod was unanimous that drilling must be halted with immediate effect.

Bishop Charles, the Synod's Liaison Bishop for the SACC, tabled an SACC Statement on the danger of South Africa being destabilised by the refusal of witnesses to appear before the Commission of Inquiry into State Capture. Synod shared the SACC's concern that disrespect for the law can destabilise South Africa. Given the country's immediate past, South Africa cannot afford such a threat. Synod of Bishops supports the SACC's call and asks parishioners to be vigilant in ensuring equality before the law for all. We call on all to respect and work to uphold the law. No one is or should be above the law.

In these uncertain times, the words of the First Letter of Peter on hope ring true: *"Cast all your anxiety on Jesus because he cares for you."* (1 Peter 5:7) May it be so for each of you. Amen