

**Synod of Bishops  
Anglican Church of Southern Africa  
February 2024 Statement**

***“Drinking from our own wells”***

The Hebrew expression, “a well of living water”, is a metaphor used in the Bible to depict the spiritual sustenance and salvation that Jesus Christ offers. The Synod of Bishops, meeting at the Schoenstatt Retreat And Conference Centre in Constantia, Cape Town, from 26<sup>th</sup> February to 1<sup>st</sup> March, was a time of drinking deeply from our own wells of experience and reflecting on the consequences of burying what lies beneath our wells.

The Synod of Bishops was under-girded by the daily rhythm of the liturgy and spiritual direction, conducted by the Revd Canon Claire Nye Hunter and the Revd Canon Andrew Hunter, who invited the Bishops to reflect on the deep wells that have shaped their leadership.

The horizon was immediately widened as the Bishops wrestled with the reality of the hostility and brutality of the Gaza conflict. At the heart of a separate statement that was prepared to capture the strong views of the Bench of Bishops is their longing for peace and justice to prevail and to be enablers as bridge-builders in peace making.

On the stage of geopolitics and economics, the Bishops were addressed by an expert jurist, Advocate Mujanku Gumbi, on international peace-broking and South Africa’s role at the International Court of Justice. The United Nations Resident Co-ordinator in South Africa, Mr Nelson Muffah, engaged the Bishops on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the effectiveness of the United Nations, especially the role of the Security Council. The Bishops in turn examined the potential of the African Union to strengthen the continent’s influence. The Bishops were moved by a passionate and exquisite presentation by Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, the current Moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches.

The General Secretary of the SA Council of Churches, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, introduced Dr Ulrich Möller, the Chair of the 1Climate International Cooperative, who sketched the possibilities of partnership with the Church in implementing renewable energy programmes.

As a body representing Bishops from Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, St Helena and South Africa, the Synod regularly addresses the issues and turmoil facing our constituent nations. At this meeting, the Chairperson of South Africa’s Independent Electoral Commission, Mr Mosotho Simon Moepya, together with the Provincial Electoral Officer, Mr Michael Hendrickse, gave the Bishops valuable insight into the preparations for the May 29<sup>th</sup> elections. He painted a picture of the complex scenario facing South Africa, with the shifting of the political landscape and the dramatic increase in the number of independent candidates.

The Bishops were deeply engaged by Provincial Registrar Lloyd Fortuin and Provincial Treasurer Rob Rogerson on matters of Canon Law, finance and the management of the Common Provincial Fund and the Provincial Pensions Board. Strategic changes need to be made to our structuring of the Trusts Board and by implication Diocesan Trusts Boards.

The Revd Matt Esau from the Canon Law Council addressed the Bishops on the need for wisdom in applying the disciplinary Canons, and urged them to seek assistance when in doubt. In a sombre moment, the Bishops heard a report of a case in which a cleric was sentenced to degradation for abandoning the service of the Church and converting to another faith.

Reporting on the work of the Province’s Liturgical Committee, Bishop Nkosinathi Ndwandwe of Natal urged the Bishops to give attention to the revisions to the Anglican Prayer Book which the Committee is working on.

Canon Rosalie Manning, who chairs the Province’s Safe and Inclusive Church Commission, addressed the Synod in a passionate and rational manner on the processes of the Commission and once again appealed to the Bishops to comply with its requirements and to ensure that persons licensed for ministry in Dioceses sign all the necessary documents.

The discipline of each Bishop keeping a record of ministry in the Diocese, known as Episcopal Acts, was explained and underlined by the Archbishop. Each Bishop is expected to keep a proper record of Episcopal Acts in his or her Diocese.

In a discussion led by Bishop Eddie Daniels of Port Elizabeth, Synod considered Theological Education and Training for Ministry, including a new path to achieve a qualification equivalent to the Diploma in Theology. Those responsible will assess whether this achieves equivalence and draft the necessary addendum to Act VI of Provincial Synod. Other theological issues needing attention or guidelines are: Permission to Officiate across Dioceses and Parish borders; clergy in full-time party political public posts; the use of preaching scarves by ordinands and lay ministers; retired clergy acting as Marriage Officers; and the need to make liturgical provision for aquamation as part of our burial rite. Synod also heard a report from Dr Percy Chinganga, Rector of the College of the Transfiguration.

A report by the the Revd Jaques Pretorius of the Anglican Board of Education highlighted provision for Early Child Development, which Synod fully supported.

Synod received a report on the formation of new Bishops by programmes run by the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, which have included peace-making, nation-building, economic issues, the stewardship of the environment, food security, migration, human trafficking and the exercise of Episcopal leadership.

Reports on ministry in the wider Anglican Communion played a big part in Synod. The Bishops heard reports from Bishop Vicentia Kgabe of Lesotho and Bishop Dalcy Dlamini of Eswatini on the inaugural meeting of African Anglican woman Bishops under the theme *African Anglican Sisters Journeying Together*. The third phase of the Lambeth Conference is focused on the Lambeth Calls and their implementation in Dioceses. The Bishops were encouraged with their Dioceses to participate in Lambeth Phase Three webinars and Bible studies. Bishop Nkosinathi Ndwandwe reported on the recent summit organised in Rome and Canterbury by the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission, which emphasised the importance of walking together with our Roman Catholic counterparts in facing common challenges in our communities.

Bishops received from Bishop Luke Pretorius of the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist a summary of the work of the Anglican Communion Science Commission, which highlighted the importance of faith leaders speaking into issues including climate change, technology – especially artificial intelligence (AI) – and health care.

In a letter of gratitude and congratulations signed by all the Bishops, Canon Cynthia Botha was acknowledged for 40 years of dedicated ministry to the Province.

As can be gleaned from this statement, the Bishops were exposed to a very wide canvass, capturing many themes of the ministry to which we are called, both globally and locally, including sacramental, pastoral, liturgical, administrative and societal roles.

To God be the glory!

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