

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Communiqué from the Synod Of Bishops

September 2026

Meeting virtually, with Bishops joining from their offices, the September session of Synod commenced with the Eucharist celebrated by Archbishop Thabo Makgoba from Bishops court, with the merciful heart of God as a central theme, focussed on how God desires to dwell in human hearts, transforming people, situations and communities.

Welcomes

His Grace Archbishop Thabo welcomed Bishop Molemo Baatjies of Lesotho and Bishop Wayne Saldanha of Mpumalanga to the bench, as well as the Ven Mkhusele Lujabe to the post of Provincial Executive Officer. He also welcomed two Vicars-General, the Ven Rus Blassoples of Saldanha Bay and the Ven Tembisi Gqoboka of Mthatha, as well as the outgoing Vicar-General of Mpumalanga, the Ven Ralph Stapleton. Synod noted that the Elective Assembly in Mthatha is scheduled for the 20th-22nd November 2026.

Theological Education

The Bishop of Zululand, Dr Viki Induku Mnculwane, tabled a revised draft of Act VI and Canon 18 incorporating inputs from previous sessions on the subject of qualifications for ordination. After further inputs, the draft will return to our February 2027 meeting.

The Revd Dr Percy Chinganga, Rector of the College of the Transfiguration, reported an enrollment of 50 students and thanked Bishops who had sent ordinands to CoTT. The College is in the second year of its Strategic Plan. He and Ms Heloise Dixie, Dean of Studies, outlined a proposed new mix of courses, to which the Bishops gave their consent. Bishop Stephen Diseko of Matlosane gave an overview of CoTT's governance.

Liturgical Matters

We currently follow the Revised Common Lectionary focussing on the life of Jesus, which means our Prayer Book Collects no longer match Sunday readings. Upon receiving a report from Bishop Nkosinathi Ndwandwe of Natal, Synod encouraged the Liturgical Committee to proceed with revising and creating a book of Collects for submission to Synod. Synod supported a proposal that the Season of Epiphany, starting on 6th January, should conclude with Candlemas (the Feast of the Presentation) on 2nd February, with white as the liturgical colour. The season following will be called "Ordinary Time" as in the past. The Major Feast of the Transfiguration is to be observed in August, with a minor observation on the Sunday before Lent. The season following Pentecost returns to being called "Ordinary Time". The Feast of Creation is to be observed on 2nd September, keeping the Robert Gray observation on 1st September. Synod also supported the inclusion of Lydia Williams as part of our ACSA commemorations.

In the Eucharistic Prayers, Synod supported the common flow of the liturgy: Gatherings, Proclamation of the Word, Responding to God's Word, Gathering at God's Table and

Sending Out. It further supported Scriptural words of Institution in Eucharistic Prayers, the Third Eucharistic Prayer being specially mentioned by the Committee. Additional Eucharistic Prayers, including a child-friendly prayer, one for Creation and another for weekdays, were supported.

Vision 2030

Bishop Mcebisi Pinyana of Grahamstown reported that a survey across the Province showed that our Vision Statement – namely that we are “*Anchored in the love of Christ, Committed to God's mission, and Transformed by the Holy Spirit*” – should not be changed. However, we are called to a renewed focus on Theology and Evangelism in order to reconnect the Good News with the people.

Lenten Bible Study 2027

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba reported on the 2027 Lenten Bible Study, “*Islands of Hope, Landscapes of Hope*”, based on the theme of the recent Anglican Consultative Council meeting, which was “Called to Hope”. Highlighting how he has found hope as a sustaining cornerstone throughout his ministry, the Archbishop advocated the study as a framework or lens through which to engage. It will be made available in Advent.

Disability Justice Commission

Bishop Amos Nkosi, Bishop Suffragan of Natal, highlighted the need for each Diocese to have a Disability Champion and for a resource manual for the advocacy of disability awareness in Dioceses and Parishes.

Mediation Framework

Mbongeni Allan Magubane, a social justice practitioner, skilfully presented a possibility that has always been at the heart of Jesus the Christ: the compassionate, skilfull ability to hold space open for people, listening with emotional intelligence and bringing them together as they navigate difficult conversations or circumstances. He proposed that the church should develop our mediation skills through specialised training, with the College of the Transfiguration playing a central role. Guided by Bishop Sepadi Moruthane of Johannesburg, Synod will continue to explore this important ministry.

South African Municipal Elections

Canon Rosalie Manning outlined threats to South Africa's democracy, including the misuse of data and social media outlets in creating and spreading fake news and in generating fear and enabling corruption. Speaking as a member of a group dedicated to defending democracy, she advocated the training of church members as accredited election monitors, especially at small voting stations.

Xenophobia in South Africa

Synod reiterated our rejection of the violence against immigrants, especially that generated by the rhetoric from new pressure groups in the country. Reports from our Dioceses highlighted parishioners and clergy affected by or killed in xenophobic attacks. Synod also

noted that certain employers take advantage of foreign workers by using them as inexpensive labour.

Synod also addressed the ministry in South African Dioceses of priests from outside the country, and urged the Department of Home Affairs to renew work permits for long-serving clergy who have enriched our church.

Modern Weapons and the Economy of War

Synod discussed the alarming proliferation of drones and of weapons powered by artificial intelligence (AI), which enable attacks without risk to those who launch them, and of directed-energy weapons such as lasers, which attack targets without using physical projectiles. Bishop Grant Walters of Port Elizabeth highlighted how autonomous weapons remove the possibility of human intervention to protect life and human dignity, citing Pope Leo XIV's exhortation that "the development and use of AI in warfare must be subject to the most rigorous ethical constraints..."¹

We are also deeply concerned at the growing "economy of war" across the world which is replacing the "economy of peace" for which we have worked, and which finances the enrichment of arms manufacturers. We heard the concerns of the Archbishop over the conflicts in the Middle East and the exploitation of tensions by the powerful to bully the world. We agreed that the Church's prophetic voice must be heard in times like this and that the Church must reject investment in the arms industry.

Palestine

Synod heard reports on the conflict affecting Palestine, Israel, Lebanon and Iran, focussing on the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians and on the situations in Gaza, the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. Infrastructure destruction is disrupting essential services such as electricity and water, healthcare services are under strain, and about 1.2 million people experience severe food insecurity. Synod calls on Anglicans and other people of faith to speak out on issues in the Middle East.

The Anglican Communion

Bishop Stephen Diseko reported on the recent meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Belfast, which called on Anglicans to have hope that we will remain one. Young people were finally fully represented at ACC. Among the themes which emerged strongly was Mission and Discipleship, with Vision 2036 aiming that the Communion should plant one million new churches. Gender Justice, which included concerns with gender-based violence (GBV) and Disability Justice, also featured. ACC deliberated on the Nairobi-Cairo Proposals, a theological document which asks what it means to be the Anglican Communion today, but no final decision was made. The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order is to work with those Provinces which are considering breaking with the Communion.

¹ Paragraph 197:
<https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html>

Ecumenical Affairs

The Bishops of Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa reported that they work collectively with other churches in their councils of churches, mainly on advocacy, environmental awareness and GBV campaigns.

Bishop Joshua Louw of Table Bay told Synod that we continue to reach out to the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa (REACH-SA, formerly the Church of England in SA). The church has asked for our prayers as they meet in Synod this year.

Bishop Charles May of the Highveld, reporting on the Church Unity Commission, said member churches are encouraged to collaborate on theological training and development.

Other Matters

In discussion of the issue of Ubungoma, or traditional healing, it was suggested that we need to do research so that we take decisions based on informed findings.

Prompted by a series of killings on the East Rand, Synod issued a separate statement on the frightening escalation of gender-based violence.

We also heard reports on the Bible Society, the Afrikaans Commission, the Third Order of St Francis and the Guild of Saint Mary Magdalene, which holds their conference this year under the theme, "Listen, Reflect and Review".

Ten Bishops reported on their Episcopal Acts, the record they are required to keep of their formal activities. Synod heard brief reports on the situations in the Dioceses of the Free State and Saldanha Bay, but court proceedings precluded a report on the Highveld.

Ms Khomo Shongwe, a clinical psychologist, addressed the Bishops on the importance of self-care, including personal consultations with psychologists.

Synod received a report on the resolution being submitted to Provincial Synod proposing the incorporation of the Diocese of Botswana into our Province. Bishop Metlhayotlhe Beleme of Botswana was welcomed as a guest of Synod.

The Archbishop reported that he would retire after the meetings of the Synod of Bishops and Provincial Standing Committee at this time next year.

Synod ended by celebrating the ministry of Bishop Nkosinathi Ndwandwe of Natal upon his retirement.

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