

**COMMUNIQUE FROM THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
SEPTEMBER 2019**

To the beloved People of God,

Grace and peace to you!

The Synod of Bishops met in Kopanong, Benoni, from Monday 23 to Tuesday 24 September 2019. The Synod was preceded by the meeting of the Electoral College for the Diocese of Mzimvubu, where the Rt Revd Tsietsi Seleokane, currently Suffragan Bishop of Natal, was elected as Bishop of Mzimvubu.

Synod began with the celebration of the Eucharist, where we heard a refreshing homily from the Rt Revd Steve Moreo, Bishop of Johannesburg, on the passage in the book of Ezra about the return of Israel. Ezra's ministry, to help a people returning to rebuild, renew and reform their social, religious and physical lives, resonated well with the commitment of ACSA – expressed in the theme of Provincial Synod – to review, renew and restore with a view to reconnecting our faith to our daily lives.

The Archbishop welcomed the Bishop of Port Elizabeth, the Rt Revd Eddie Daniels, and Bishop-elect Luke Pretorius of the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist, who were attending Synod for the first time. Also in attendance were two Vicars-General, the Ven Keith de Vos from Cape Town and the Very Revd Tanki Mofana from Lesotho.

Synod met against the backdrop of confusion in the South African political landscape, of fresh outbreaks of xenophobic attacks against fellow Africans from other nations and of renewed activism over the scourge of violence against women, children and other vulnerable people. This situation is very disturbing and cause for major concern, and we endorse our Archbishop's appeal to the Church to join civil society in mobilising to end these evils.

We urge girls in our Church to demand an end to the way in which too many boys and men in our society treat women. We urge boys to set an example to the rest of society by treating all, especially girls and women, with respect, dignity and compassion. Let Anglican youth groups throughout our Province become renowned for being safe spaces in which young women feel valued and young men are admired in their communities for their caring and respectful treatment of girls and women.

We also urge people in our parishes to stand up for other vulnerable people such as migrants in South Africa. As disciples of Christ we are bound to be sensitive to God's people who happen to come from outside our borders. We condemn the violence meted out against them, we express our condolences to those who have lost members of their families and we share our prayers for the traumatised.

We remind all of the words of Joshua: *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."*

In our discussions on situations outside South Africa, our hearts were warmed as we heard the good news of the successful peace initiatives in Mozambique and prayed for that country as they prepare for elections.

Bishops shared the sadness and pain around the resignation of the Bishop of Natal, the Right Revd Dino Gabriel. The Bishops accepted his resignation and resolved to show their love, care and support for the Diocesan family and for Bishop Dino and his family. The Bishops resolved that Pastoral Letters on the situation should be sent to the Diocese and to the Bishop.

Further reflection ensued on the Diocese of Zululand, where the Rt Revd Monument Makhanya resigned last year. The Archbishop reported that he had asked the Archbishop of the Province of Central Africa to minister to Bishop Makhanya for three months. The Vicars-General of the Diocese, retired Bishop Funginkosi Mbhele and Canon Hamilton Mbatha, will continue their ministry of oversight and pastoral care in the Diocese.

Synod discussed ways of ministering to the Rt Revd Adam Taaso, the Bishop of Lesotho, who has suffered an incapacitating stroke, and his family. In consultation with the Diocese, it was agreed that he should go on retirement with effect from 31 January 2020.

We noted that no women clergy have recently been elected as bishops and agreed that there should be an intentional effort to investigate why this is the case. The Archbishop has established a commission to do this work.

A report was presented by Lay Canon Rosalie Manning on ensuring a Safe & Inclusive Church in which no one suffers abuse of any kind. Professor Barney Pityana presented a preliminary report on the Archbishop's Commission on the College of the Transfiguration. We also heard a report on the Archbishop's Commission on Human Sexuality. All three reports were scheduled to go before Provincial Synod.

Synod also discussed the issue of clergy who are active card-carrying members of political parties. It was agreed that the practice should not be encouraged as it has potential to polarise congregations. We also reflected on the way in which we could emphasise the importance of saving the environment by moving towards holding paperless synods. Bishops also expressed concern for the sustainability of HOPE Africa.

The Bishops bade farewell to Bishop Oswald Swartz, Bishop of Kimberley and Kuruman as he goes on retirement. Bishop Ossie was thanked for his wonderful episcopal ministry in ACSA.

We commend you to God's love and keeping and ask you to remember us in prayer as we meet in Provincial Synod to discern God's will as we grapple with some of the critical issues that face us as Church.

"To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." — Jude 24-25