

# Archbishop upbeat on Lambeth

August 22 2008 at 10:14am

By Natasha Joseph

The Anglican Church, both locally and abroad, is "extremely healthy" and is growing both in numbers and quality, says Cape Town Archbishop Thabo Makgoba.

Makgoba has urged SA Anglicans not to "lose heart" in the face of controversial discussions on women clergy, the church's stance on homosexuality and talk of a schism over contentious issues.

He recently returned from the Anglican Church's Lambeth Conference, which is held every 10 years and took place in Canterbury, England.

Hundreds of bishops from around the world gathered for the conference, which began on July 16 and ended on August 3.

A quarter of the world's Anglican bishops boycotted it because of tensions around the issue of homosexuality.

But speaking from his official residence in Bishops court this week, Makgoba said interactions at the conference had been "cordial and positive" and that the bishops had displayed "maturity and openness".

"The theme centred around our identity as Anglican bishops and their spouses, taking our mission into a painfully broken world," Makgoba said.

Small "cell groups" met for bible studies each morning. Makgoba's group consisted of bishops from Burma, Korea, Scotland and England.

Larger groups of 40 people then gathered for "indabas" - a term used at Makgoba's suggestion, as he was one of the conference's organisers.

Topics included the environment, HIV and Aids, the Anglican Church's current processes and sexuality, he said.

Theology of the environment is a cause close to Makgoba's heart, and the SA Anglican Church will soon produce a booklet that addresses the responsibility of Christians to engage in "caring for creation" by "going green".

Makgoba was tasked with representing the six million-strong SA Anglican community, and the knowledge that people in the church hold vastly different views about issues such as homosexuality made him "proud to be a Christian".

"Jesus didn't opt for easy options. We're alive, and we don't have solutions. We have problems which we must acknowledge and discuss."

He said the roughly 600 bishops at the conference had engaged in "frank discussion" on "human sexuality" and other "controversial issues".

But the Lambeth Conference was not about issuing decrees, Makgoba said.

"Lambeth is not a decision-making body. We come together, discuss the challenges of our ministry, see how we can support each other."

The world's archbishops will meet in February to discuss the Reflections document, which details the Lambeth discussions.

"We will continue to debate (homosexuality and the ordination of women)."

- The Reflections document can be found at <http://www.lambethconference.org/reflections/document.cfm> and is also available in PDF format.

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