

# Church in row with teachers' union

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By Leanne Jansen [Comment on this story](#)



INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS Violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity should stop, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba said. File photo: Candice Chaplin.

Durban -

Education was a moral issue and teaching a calling, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa said on Sunday.

It was speaking on the call made to Anglicans who were members of the SA Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu), to transform the organisation into a body which served education or to resign from it.

At a meeting of the church's provincial synod, its highest legislative body, it adopted a strongly worded resolution which included asking Parliament to declare teaching an essential service, and making it clear to education department officials that "inefficiency and corruption" were absolutely unacceptable.

The theme of the gathering of the synod, which is held every three years, was: "A vision for education – education for a vision."

The Reverend Andrew Hunter, Dean of Grahamstown, who proposed the resolution, said the church's stance was born of its involvement in schools across the country, and an "anguish" that public education was not delivering as it should be – despite the significant budget from the government.

Hunter said its resolution was not an attack and that the church affirmed the work being done by officials and teachers who wanted the best for pupils.

"We are saying to both sectors, 'Please, please get yourselves together. It is a matter of integrity. A good teacher is a gift for life. Teachers used to have a sense of vocation.'"

Hunter said that while some teachers were overwhelmed by the problems in their schools which were beyond their control, to develop young people was to serve God.

In its resolution text, which appears on Archbishop Thabo Makgoba's blog, the synod called on governing bodies to take ownership of their schools and urged Anglicans to do all in their power to ensure that schools were places of learning and safety.

In a statement released via its Twitter account, Sadtu expressed "anger and disgust" in reaction, and accused the church of opportunism.

"Being in a democracy for nearly 20 years, it pains us to find different types of education – one for the poor and one for the rich – which is not of our making.

"We maintain that the majority of our members (numbering 260 000) are dedicated to the profession but are frustrated that they are not receiving sufficient support like resources to teach in schools."

It said the synod's real agenda was to target Cosatu affiliates to weaken the ANC.

"Its call for education to be declared an essential service is a dead call... The dictatorial and judgmental stance by the Anglican Church is totally unbecoming for an institution. It lacks the Christian agenda but reeks of a political agenda."

Sadtu further accused the church of being silent on the country's moral degeneration, which saw teachers beaten by pupils and drug use wreaking havoc in communities.

However, the Reverend Ian Booth, the chairman of the Diakonia Council of Churches, said it was the church's duty to speak on issues in society and that, historically, it had always been involved in education.

"The church has no role in party politics or being partisan, but speaking when a matter is a question of integrity and morality, then the church needs to speak," he said.

Booth said he too believed that education was an essential service.

"There used to be an understanding that teaching was a vocation, a calling," he said, echoing Hunter. "Let's get back to that, for the sake of the kids."

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