

Task team clears city bishop over fund ‘misuse’

October 5 2012 at 01:56pm

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Pretoria Anglican Bishop Jo Seoka

NTANDO MAKHUBU

THE HIGH-level task team, comprising senior bishops and assembled by the highest body of the Anglican Church, has dismissed as unfounded allegations of the misuse of church funds for personal housing by Pretoria Diocese’s Bishop Jo Seoka.

Convened in June and set up in terms of Canon 21.3, which gave the synod of senior bishops of the Southern African region the power to investigate problems in a diocese, the task team was tasked with, among other issues, probing the allegations of financial mismanagement.

Seoka had been accused by the parish council of using R500 000 of the diocese’s money to pay for a bond on his home.

The team was led by the chairman of Highveld Diocese, Bishop David Bannermann. Judge Ian Farlam who heads the Marikana inquiry, a Mr Mjekula and Palesa Ncholo, who is an advocate, were also members of the team tasked with investigating a series of developments involving Seoka, members of the diocese and parishioners.

Yesterday, Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba said the synod had received the report from the team and had thoroughly discussed it.

It also established a committee of bishops to follow up on the decisions reached by the Synod of Bishops.

The committee, Makgoba said, had also communicated the synod’s response to the task team’s report to the parties concerned.

He also said they had met the diocesan executive of the Diocese of Pretoria, as well as the St Alban’s Cathedral Parish Council.

“The task team’s report states clearly that allegations that the Bishop of Pretoria, Dr Jo Seoka, had acted improperly regarding a loan for housing are groundless.

“The bishops call upon those making these unfounded allegations to desist.”

The synod discussed the task team’s report during a meeting of bishops and the provincial standing committee late in September.

Seoka and church management had been accused by parishioners of, among others, being autocratic in their management style and the team set out to find the root causes of the year-old discord that had surfaced in the diocese.

Makgoba said discussions were still continuing as was a search for a resolution for the other matters in dispute.

“Consideration will be given to making additional information available, as appropriate, when this process has continued further,” he added.

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