

Statement by the Synod of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa

*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Romans 12:2*

We, the Synod of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, gathered from 6 to 10 February, 2012, under Mantsopa Mountain at the St Augustine’s Centre, Modderpoort, in the Diocese of the Free State, for a time shaped by worship, prayer and reflection around the theme of spirited leadership.

Inspired by the beautiful scenery surrounding the diocesan centre, we worked and relaxed under the generous hospitality provided by Bishop Paddy Glover and his team, in the comfortably refurbished mission centre

We began our work with a lively discussion facilitated by Bishop Brian Germond around the topic of creatively thinking outside of the box. We re-examined some of the mission opportunities God provides us, and the recent proposals of multiplication coming from the dioceses of Mozambique challenged us to think again on how we might respond to the fresh manifestation of the Spirit of God in our midst. We were challenged to take imaginative and courageous action that might include alternative models of ministry, mission and episcopal oversight. We agreed that we must willingly take risks, in faith.

At the invitation of the Bishop of Umzimvubu, we dealt at length with the complicated issues presently affecting his Diocese. After extensive discussions, we unanimously resolved the diocese should be placed under the care of a provincial administrative team. The team, appointed by the Archbishop, is mandated to take immediate action to resolve specific legal and financial issues; to offer pastoral care for the people, clergy and the bishop; and to initiate a longer term process of reconciliation. A letter to this effect will soon be read to the Diocese of Umzimvubu, by Bishops Rubin Phillip and Ebenezer Ntlali.

We revisited the issue of pastoral standards for civil partnerships, recognizing that we are engaged in a long term process even though many of our people now face immediate pain, isolation, and loneliness. While circumstances vary from diocese to diocese, all of us are openly engaged in a process of listening and discernment. Several bishops presented feedback from their dioceses. Special thanks were afforded to Bishop Bethlehem and the Diocese of Port Elizabeth for their example in readily engaging so deeply and thoroughly with this pastoral reality. We reaffirm that all dioceses continue to observe only the orthodox teaching and pastoral practices long held by the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

We noted the importance of having a clear and uniform provincial policy on licencing clergy to ministries in our dioceses, and examined a draft policy paper. Bishops were encouraged to enable all clergy to be well informed about this policy. We also received, with thanks, templates, canonical references, and a draft agreement for implementing this policy in our dioceses.

We acknowledged the important historic role we have had in the work of education in the countries of our Province and, in the spirit of the Archbishop’s *Regeneration for Education* vision, recognized the opportunity for us to take on an innovative role within the dynamic reality of our nations. Therefore, we resolved to appoint a standing body under the leadership of Bishop Peter Lee. This will coordinate our diverse educational activities, and describe a set of principles for engagement with the work of education in our Province. We also

congratulated the Archbishop on his recent appointment as Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape.

The Archbishop supported a call from the Dean of the Province that each diocese should send a further two students for training at the College of the Transfiguration. The Bishops agreed to consider this request seriously, and act upon it.

We joyfully acclaimed the life of Elizabeth Paul, recognizing her vibrant ministry of preaching, healing and exorcising demons in the Diocese of Umtata during the 1950s and 1960s. We agreed to place her feast in our liturgical calendar for 13 May. We also praised God with the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist for the recent positive developments at Jane Furse, and continue to hold the centre in our prayer.

We rejoiced at the news surrounding the Anglicans Ablaze conference scheduled for 3 – 6 October, 2012 and we strongly encourage all God's people to take advantage of this inspirational opportunity. We also took delight at the presentation of the new Lenten Course developed by the Diocese of Johannesburg, and we wholeheartedly recommend it for use in our parishes. Together with the entire of Church of God, we joined in giving thanks to God for the 20th anniversary of the ordination of women in our Province. Each Diocese committed itself to send at least one women priest to participate in the upcoming celebrations.

We noted with concern the recent incident concerning children under the care of the Sisters of the Community of Jesus' Compassion in the Diocese of Natal and support the decision to establish a review committee.

We send our greetings, prayers of support and good wishes to our brothers and sisters of CAPA meeting this same week in Rwanda. May God enrich your fellowship together. We also send our prayers of support and greetings to our sisters and brothers of the Anglican Consultative Council meeting in New Zealand later this year; and to the General Synod of the Church of England, meeting in London this week.

We acknowledged the notice of retirement of the Rt. Revd. Paddy Glover as Bishop of the Free State and Dean of our Province. We will greatly miss Bishop Paddy's enthusiasm, generous spirit, and fellowship in our Synods, but wish him and Kirsty a well-deserved rest and our heartfelt prayers as they enter a new phase of life together.

We gave thanks to the Archbishop and his planning team for providing the opportunity for us to enter into retreat together. This time of prayer and reflection on our roles as spirited leaders refreshed and challenged us in many ways. The Jesuit Institute South Africa provided three wonderful facilitators: Puleng Matseneng, Raymond Perrier and Fr. Thomas Plastow SJ, to lead our retreat. We were introduced to Ignatian Spirituality and the importance of identifying our deepest desires through daily reflection. This tool seeks to increase our self-awareness and thereby make us more aware of our own strengths and weaknesses. We spent time in small groups, silent reflection, writing journals, and open discussion as we examined various ways in which we can better live out our call to Spirited Leaders in God's Church. Mr Adam Kahane's presentation on the need to walk in tension between the extremes of power and love clearly touched many of us. Adam's ten laws of power and love proved a very useful tool that we hope to share with leaders in our dioceses.

We thanked God for our time together, and the opportunity to grow closer to him and one another, and through this to seek God's transforming renewal of our minds, our lives and our ministries.