

The Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist

(Anglican Church of Southern Africa in Limpopo)

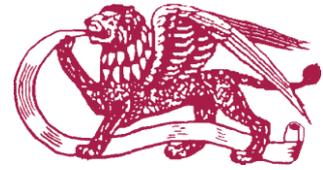
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Bishop's Charge to the 12th Diocesan Synod

16th August 2018

Living and Sharing Jesus-Shaped Life

Joshua 24:14-24; Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:4-8

1 Introduction

1.1 My Last Charge!

Since I will be retiring as Diocesan Bishop at the end of February 2019, this will be my last Charge to you – the eighth since my Installation in February 2000. So, inevitably, it will have something of a personal touch to it. The last nineteen years have been the most wonderful, difficult, exciting, painful, fulfilling and challenging of my life!

We have seen God at work in amazing ways as together we have multiplied parishes, made disciples, expanded our vision, trained leaders and borne witness to God's love and holiness in and beyond Limpopo. You have joined me in the *Growing the Church* and *Anglicans Ablaze* movements that are transforming the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. You have supported and prayed for my family and me as Sarah was taken ill in 2000 and died in 2009; Katy, Tasha and Jeremy have matriculated, completed degrees and got married; and Tasha has had three children. You have celebrated and rejoiced as God led Colleen and me together and is restoring us through the gift of marriage and partnership in the Gospel: a relationship of life, light and joy. And what a wonderful thing it has been that Colleen has been able to spend this year with me, sharing in ministry and getting to know the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist!



1.2 Thank You

I will always love you deeply and give thanks to God for this season of my life. I cannot thank each person individually in this Charge, but here are some special thanks to:

- ✦ Everyone who is here at Synod, and for the contribution you are making.
- ✦ The Clergy and Staff at Christ Church Cathedral, who have a lot to do behind the scenes.

Diocesan Vision: To make disciples in vibrant, self-sufficient congregations established and linked to each other by sharing in resources; ministry & service; outreach & evangelism.

- ✦ The Diocesan Staff and Interns, who have worked long hours preparing everything.
- ✦ The Dean and members of Chapter who constantly support and advise the Bishop on matters of spiritual leadership and personnel.
- ✦ The Diocesan Board of Trustees and Finance Board, who oversee Diocesan property and money, and make sure that it always serves our Vision.
- ✦ The leaders at many levels: Clergy, Churchwardens, Church Councils, Office Bearers of Organizations, those responsible for Ministries...
- ✦ The Agenda Committee, which guides and supports the Bishop in planning and leading the Synod.
- ✦ The Diocesan Officers who work hard behind the scenes: Chancellor, Registrar, Administrator and Bursar
- ✦ Those who have served the Diocese so well in the past and have moved on to other places or have died.
- ✦ The caterers, intercessors, security people and others who will be working hard throughout Synod.

Thank you all!

2 Our God

2.1 Living and Sharing Jesus-Shaped Life

The most important thing in my life, and I hope it will remain the most important thing for the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist in the years ahead, is to know and serve the one true God: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. As we get to know this awesome, holy, loving God we are transformed into the likeness of Jesus (*2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 12:1-2*) – we **live** an increasingly **Jesus-shaped life**. But we cannot keep this life to ourselves: we find that we have to **share** this **Jesus-shaped life** with others in word and deed (*2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Matthew 5:13-16*). Jesus gave his life for us – let us respond by giving our lives to him in faith and obedience.

That is why **living and sharing Jesus-shaped life** has become the theme of the Anglican Communion's Season of Intentional Discipleship and Disciple-Making. I am privileged to serve on the oversight group for this movement. It is also the theme of this Diocesan Synod. Please join the whole Communion, and me, in praying:

Almighty God,
 You have called us to live and share
 Jesus-shaped life
 in a Jesus-shaped church
 for a Jesus-shaped world.
 Empower us with your Holy Spirit
 to live as disciples who make disciples
 of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

2.2 God Comes First!

Learning from Joshua

I have always identified with Joshua in the Old Testament, and Barnabas (the "Son of Encouragement") in the New. Joshua followed Moses, the great liberator and law-giver, who had established Israel as God's people – he led them into the Promised Land. Barnabas followed the first apostles, helped Paul and Mark discover their ministries, and encouraged the early church.

So, God has often called me to follow a leader who established something new. Bishop Philip was the "Moses" who led and prayed the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist into existence, and set it on

the firm foundation of God's Word and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. My task was to build on that, set up systems, clarify the vision, and equip people to carry it out. I have done my best to be a "Joshua" to this Diocese.

At the end of his life, Joshua challenged the people of God to continue as he had done. As my ministry here draws to a close I am calling you to do the same. We can learn some important things from *Joshua 24:14-24*.

Joshua challenged the people to put God first and serve him with all their hearts (14). This means that everything else must be in second place or discarded altogether. He called them to put away false gods, the gods that the people around them worshipped (23). Today most people don't worship statues of silver or gold, but many live for other "gods" like money, status, power, pleasure or sport. Some people worship their "culture". Others treat traditional "Anglican" ways as an idol. Everything must be submitted to the authority of God and Lordship of Christ.

I love Joshua's leadership style: he didn't just tell the people what to do – he set the example. "Whether or not you choose to serve the living God," he said, "as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." (15). My family and I have tried to do the same in times of growth, sickness, death and restoration. Thank God that many of you, in the power of the Holy Spirit, have made the same choice – keep it up, and God will be with you!

When the people insisted, "We will serve the Lord! (18)" Joshua said, "You can't! (19)". It is impossible to serve God in our own strength. We will fail. We will be drawn to false gods. We will turn aside and be seduced by the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. Only when we are crucified with Christ (*Galatians 2:19-20; 5:24*), confess our sin and failures (*1 John 1:9-10*), take up our cross daily to follow Jesus (*Luke 9:23*), and allow God to keep filling us with the Holy Spirit – only then can we serve the Lord effectively.

2.3 The World Needs God's People

South Africa and the world need the people of God, the church, to take the lead and show them the way back to God. So pray for those in authority (*1 Timothy 2:1-4*), that God's kingdom, God's reign of justice and peace, will be established on earth as it is in heaven (*Matthew 6:10*). And challenge those in leadership, whether in business, government, school or family, to live according to God's values. As Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (*Mark 1:15*). Preach the gospel, and explain its implications as well as the consequences of refusing to go God's way, whether people want to hear it or not (*2 Timothy 4:2*)!

Finally, don't just talk! Set a good example by the way you live and conduct your business, both in church and in the world. Here I want to commend especially the Diocesan Financial Team, Diocesan Finance Board, Diocesan Trustees and the Finance Working Committee, for achieving "clean" audits every year once again. In the name of God we challenge those in government and every sphere of society to do the same.

3 Our Purpose

3.1 The Great Commission

Our Diocesan Vision is built on the commission that Jesus gave his church until he returns, in *Matthew 28:18-20*. According to this:

We have the **right** to proclaim the Gospel, because all authority belongs to Jesus (18) – we don't need the permission of any government or human authority to tell people the good news of his life,

death and resurrection. And no one has the right to stop us either. God calls all of us to be witnesses to what he has done in our lives, and gifts some to be evangelists.

We have the **duty** to be disciples (followers or apprentices) of Jesus who make more disciples – until all nations come to know him and follow him. The Anglican communion has recognised five characteristics of Christian disciples – also known as the five marks of mission:

- 1) **Disciples TELL:** We proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom. We share and welcome stories of faith. We share our faith through every day living (family, work, school, community, church).
- 2) **Disciples TEACH:** We teach, baptise and nurture new believers. We read scripture and pray daily. We gather regularly with others to worship, pray, share and learn.
- 3) **Disciples TEND:** We respond to human need by loving service. We give our time and talents to care for the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being of others. We protect the poor, marginalised and most vulnerable among us.
- 4) **Disciples TRANSFORM:** We work to transform unjust structures of society, challenging violence of every kind and pursuing peace and reconciliation. We repent of all our sins, asking and offering forgiveness. We pursue reconciliation of broken relationships in personal life, community and society, and advocate for justice and peace.
- 5) **Disciples TREASURE:** We strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth. We seek to live responsibly and creatively on earth, and care for the whole of creation.

We have the **tools** that Jesus gave us (19b-20a). We baptise people into the life of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We teach them from the Bible using resources like Alpha and Rooted in Jesus. We celebrate communion regularly to experience for ourselves his saving death and resurrection, and to look forward to the coming of his Kingdom. We are learning to do this not in our own strength, but with all his wisdom and mighty power (Ephesians 1:17-21), knowing that Jesus is with us always (20b).

3.2 Diocesan Vision, Goals and Priorities

Our **vision** is:

To make disciples in vibrant, self-sufficient congregations established and linked to each other by sharing in:

- ⌘ Resources
- ⌘ Ministry & Service
- ⌘ Outreach & Evangelism.

Everything we do must be measured against this vision!

In order to see the vision coming true, we have **six goals** for each parish. Slowly but surely I am seeing these things starting to happen in an increasing number of churches. I wonder how many of them are true of your parish, and what your plans are to make them happen?

Our goals for each parish are:

- 1) A **Stipendiary Rector** to give leadership, vision and training.
- 2) A team of **Self-Supporting Clergy** to share in sacramental, teaching and pastoral ministry.
- 3) A **Youth Pastor**, leading a team of trained and licensed Youth Leaders to make disciples among our young people.
- 4) Many trained **Lay Leaders**: these include Licensed Lay Ministers (Worship Leaders, Preachers, Pastoral Carers, Evangelists), Churchwardens and leaders of ministries and organisations.

- 5) **All members** discovering and using their gifts to serve God in and beyond the church, and learning to live and share Jesus-shaped life.
- 6) To use our land and buildings for **community development projects** of one kind or another: for example homework clubs, drop-in centres, food gardens, soup kitchens.

We also have **priorities** that the Diocesan Lekgotla has identified for us focused on over the last five years. As we work on these, with faith, perseverance and commitment, we are slowly making progress towards making the goals and vision a reality. God is great and good! As I look back over the last 19 years I see that, despite our weakness, rural nature and relative poverty, God has achieved great things and we have made good progress.

The Christian life is more like a marathon than a sprint, so keep going and God will do even greater things. Our priorities over the last five years have been:

- 1) **Practical Discipleship**: we need to learn, and teach our people, what it means to follow Jesus in the joys and challenges of everyday life. What does it mean to be a disciple at home, in my relationships, at work or school, and in South Africa as well as in church? This is where it is so important to lead people into a personal relationship with God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), teach them to pray, help them to read and study the Bible, and help them to implement what they learn. People don't automatically become disciples by attending services and receiving communion! It must be an intentional process. Programmes like Rooted in Jesus are very powerful in this area.
- 2) **Multiplication of Parishes** and planting new churches: we have learnt how to multiply parishes well, and need to press on with that process – the next one will probably be Sekhukhuneland. I don't think we are keeping up with the new villages and towns that are springing up in many places. We need to develop ways to start new churches without needing to spend a lot of money on buildings.
- 3) **Youth and Child Development**: we realised some years ago that, in order to raise up leaders of the future, we need to help our young people grow as disciples of Jesus now. It has been exciting to see the VIP (Volunteer and Interns Programme) growing. We have Interns at the Diocesan Centre, Christ Church Cathedral, Extension 44 and Sekhukhuneland (Jane Furse Memorial Village). This needs to be expanded to more parishes, and we have a growing number of young people who are keen to join the programme. We are also making good progress training Licensed Youth Leaders – I believe we should aim to have at least two in each of our chapelries and congregations (that means about 400 in all!).
- 4) **Leadership Training**: everyone at every level of leadership needs training – not only when they start, but in an ongoing way. I am very encouraged that we are a Diocese of learners: many of our people are studying through TEE College; about 200 have received Langham Preaching training; Churchwardens and Parish Councillors receive training at Archdeaconry level (using "Guidelines for Leaders"); we have training in Christian Listening and Worship Leading; we are setting up a team to train Licensed Evangelists; we have at least one Clergy School each year as well as Clergy Fellowship and Training days. The Guild of St Mark (Fellowship of Vocation) is functioning well, and we have three stipendiary Ordination candidates at the College of the Transfiguration, with more preparing to go in coming years.
- 5) **Information Technology** is also important, because it can help us communicate with one another and share the Good News with those who are not in the church. We are making slow but steady progress with getting our members registered on MyAnglican, which is a very powerful church management tool, developed by Growing the Church and now standing on its own. Increasingly we are using cell phone messages to reach our people. I would love to see the day when every clergyperson and every parish has access to the Internet and Email via computer or tablet, and has received the training to make the most of

it. This would make it so much easier to keep in contact, support one another, and report on what is happening.

4 Our Strength

4.1 Receive the Holy Spirit!

At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples – recorded uniquely in each of the Gospels: *Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:19-23*. But interestingly he told them **not** to get on with it immediately, or to hold a strategic planning lekgotla, or to plan a coupe de tat!

Instead, as we read in *Acts 1:4-8*, Jesus told them to **wait** for the promise of the Father (4), the gift of the Holy Spirit (*Ezekiel 36:24-27; Joel 2:28-32*). We also need to receive that power, because there is no other way to accomplish the task Jesus has given us. We all need to be baptised, immersed, filled with the Holy Spirit (5). He explained that his followers will not often have political power, or even understand what is going on in the world of politics (6-7). But, Jesus said, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (8).

Many things happen when we invite God to fill us with the Holy Spirit:

- ✦ We know that we are forgiven, accepted as sons and daughters of God;
- ✦ We receive supernatural power to continue to do the things Jesus did;
- ✦ We find ourselves filled with love for God that overflows in worship;
- ✦ We are transformed inwardly to reflect increasingly the character of Jesus;
- ✦ We begin to love one another, our neighbours and even our enemies in new ways;
- ✦ We discover that God uses us to transform the communities in which we live, and even to change the world! (*Acts 17:6*)

4.2 Preparing for a New Bishop

I am convinced that this is the right time for me to move on – I will be into my 20th year as Bishop when I retire at the end of February 2019. God has more for me to do in retirement, and something new for you as well. As I have said before, I will always love you, and Colleen and I hope to see you from time to time in the years ahead. Thank you for your love, prayers, support and partnership in life, mission and ministry.

Now I am urging you to have a godly, Spirit-filled process of electing a new Bishop. I have spoken about these things at the last few DSC meetings and have written about them in Ad Clerum letters. I will say some more at DSC in November to try to help you to understand the process, but I will not try to influence who you elect. Just wait upon the Lord, seek his will, pray, and be obedient to him... and I believe God will give you the right person to lead the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist into the next season.

God bless you all!

†Martin: St Mark
the Evangelist

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