

Foreword

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, dear People of God,

When I was installed as Archbishop, I spoke in my Charge of us together being ‘partners in the gospel, as we seek afresh to discover what is it to be the body of Christ in our time, and who God is in Jesus Christ, for us here and now.’ Pursuing that path of discovery, through wide consultation across our whole Church, led to us adopting at Provincial Synod in 2010 this shared Vision and Mission Statement for the Anglican Church in Southern Africa.

We are a hugely diverse church, stretching from St Helena to Mozambique, from Angola’s border with the DRC to Cape Agulhas, from rich urban centres to impoverished informal settlements, from lush agricultural countryside to great stretches of desert. Yet, whoever we are, wherever we are, we believe that God is calling us all to be Anglicans who ‘ACT’ – to be a community of God’s people who seek to be ‘Anchored in the love of Christ, Committed to God’s Mission, and Transformed by the Holy Spirit.’ This is what we hold in common, even as we each focus on the particular priorities of mission and ministry of our own Dioceses and Parishes.

I therefore commend these resources to you, whether or not you will be attending the Anglicans Ablaze Conference later this year. My prayer is that they will help you draw more deeply on the rich promises of the God who ‘first loved us’ (1 Jn 4:19) and so share more fully in this common calling we believe God has placed before us. May we know his leading and empowering, transforming us and equipping us for mission, so we may become more fully the body of Christ in our time, and share Christ more clearly with the world around. We also offer these resources for use beyond our Province, hoping that they may be an encouragement to Christians everywhere, critically engaging with Scripture and context, as with the Anglican Communion’s Bible in the Life of the Church project.

And I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Bryanston in October, so we may truly be “A Generation Rising Up” in response to God’s call upon us.

Yours in the Service of Christ

+Thabo Cape Town

Acknowledgements

These resources for sermons and small group studies arose from the planning process for the Anglicans Ablaze Conference in October 2012, “A Generation Rising Up”. Since this will be held in Johannesburg, we decided to pay courtesy visits to the four bishops in Gauteng to seek their support as ‘host bishops’. We also wanted to hear from them how best this conference could serve both their Dioceses and the Province. We had very good meetings with Bishops Peter Lee, Brian Germond and David Bannerman (Bishop Jo Seoka, always supportive of Growing the Church, was unavailable). A common theme emerged: “Do something to help people prepare for the conference, and to reflect on the ACSA Vision with the longer term in mind. Furthermore, help those who will not be at the conference also to engage meaningfully with ACSA’s Vision and Mission Statement.” These Bible-based studies and preaching resources were therefore developed to meet this request. Archbishop Thabo welcomed the idea with great enthusiasm.

I would like to thank the following people who did the hard work of preparing material: Sarah Rowland-Jones, Lynn Pedersen, +Nkosinathi Ndwandwe, +Tsietsi Seleokane, Mark Spyker, René August, Luba Mayekiso, Paul Siaki, Chris Viljoen, Nancy Tshabalala, Colleen Thomas and Charlotte Brown. Lynda and Peter Wyngaard provided theological oversight and editorial control, bringing a common structure and preparing for printing. Nicole Corlew offered invaluable advice on format and making the study more inter-active. Estelle Adams co-ordinated the project on behalf of +Martin Breytenbach, Growing the Church's Liaison Bishop and myself. Our heartfelt thanks to each one of you. To God be all the glory.

How to use these Resources

We have prepared these resources with the hope that they will be drawn upon in a Sunday sermon series, with each theme then being studied further in small groups during the following week, giving opportunities for more inter-active engagement, wresting biblically and contextually, and concrete ideas for taking follow-up action. They are offered to all Parishes of our Province, whether or not sending people to the Anglicans Ablaze conference – though we hope they will be of particular value in helping participants prepare.

The material can also be used just for a sermon series, or just in small groups. If your parish does not have such groups, we hope these studies will encourage their formation. Where they are used for a sermon series, we encourage you to be creative in integrating the themes with your own styles of liturgy and worship, through careful choice of hymns, songs, readings and prayers.

Please remember that the ACSA Vision and Mission Statement are intended to complement and support your diocesan and parish visions, not to replace them. Our hope is that you may find helpful links or connecting points between provincial, diocesan and parish aims. We believe the ACSA Vision is sufficiently broad for common ground to be found easily.

I cannot remember another Provincial event like the Anglicans Ablaze Conference which seeks to bring large numbers of Anglicans together to embrace a fresh and exciting vision, and seek to flesh out this vision with meaning and purpose so that we may see God's Church grow spiritually, numerically and holistically.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the New Life Conference Centre, 3-6 October 2012. God bless you all.

The Revd Trevor Pearce
Director: Growing the Church