

Archbishop Dr Thabo Makgoba
Provincial Synod – Charge
**‘Anchored in the Love of Christ, Committed to God’s Mission,
Transformed by the Holy Spirit’**
29 September 2010

Habakkuk 2:1-4, Galatians 6:1-10, Luke 4:1-13

Introduction

May I speak in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, members of Synod, distinguished guests, I greet you in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and welcome you to the thirty-second session of the Provincial Synod of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

I extend a particular welcome to our invited guests – and especially to you, my dear brother from Haiti, Bishop Jean-Zaché Duracin. May your time with us be a time of growing and deepening partnership in the gospel. A special welcome also to you who are at Synod for the first time. I hope you will quickly feel at home among our processes and procedures, and able to make a full contribution. We also greet Dr Mamphela Ramphele, thanking God for her years of faithful service, for which it is our privilege to honour her today with the Order of St Simon of Cyrene.

On the Feast of St Michael and All Angels, we ask God to send his holy angels to watch over us, and keep us safe in the centre of his will, throughout our time together. May he bless and guide us, may he strengthen and inspire us with his vision, so that we may be his faithful instruments in the building up of his Church and in his mission to his world.

God’s Vision for God’s Church in God’s World

Let me begin by thanking all those who have helped in preparing this Charge – first, as always, Lungi and my children, who have put up with weeks of inattention! I also thank the Bishops court staff, my brother Bishops, and everyone who has contributed reflections, reports and other input. This Charge is a collegial effort intended to reflect the perspectives, concerns and activities, of our whole Province.

The theme of both Charge and Synod is the Vision offered by Provincial Standing Committee: that we, as the Anglican community in Southern Africa, seek to be

- Anchored – in the love of Christ
- Committed – to God’s mission
- Transformed – by the Holy Spirit.

The context for our response to God's vision, is provided by the prophet Habakkuk: 'I will stand at my watch-post, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me'. Jesus similarly began his ministry with prayer and fasting in the wilderness. Now we in turn come away together to seek the Lord, following our own forebears' example. Exactly 140 years ago, in 1870, our first Provincial Synod met, and laid the foundations of our Constitution and Canons, on which all subsequent generations have built.

Let me pay specific tribute to the legacy of my two immediate predecessors. We wish 'Arch Desmond', and Ma Leah, many peaceful, joyful, restful, years ahead as he retires from public life. We also thank God for Archbishop Njongo, for it was on his watch that the 2002 and 2005 Provincial Synods affirmed a commitment to developing a Vision Statement, a renewed expression of our identity and calling in the new era before us.

In my Installation Charge, I spoke of our need to 'seek afresh to discover what it is to be the body of Christ in our time, and who God is in Jesus Christ, for us here and now'. Since June 2008 Ms Glenda Wildschut has chaired this process. Thank you, Glenda, and everyone who has worked with you. Now PSC has challenged us to be Anchored – in the love of Christ, Committed – to God's mission, Transformed – by the Holy Spirit. This call from God echoes throughout Scripture.

First, being anchored in the love of God, made manifest in Jesus Christ: Habakkuk tells us to wait on the Lord; St Paul speaks of ensuring we fulfil the law of Christ, of loving one another as he has loved us; Jesus declares that we live not by bread alone (but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord as in Deuteronomy 8:3).

Second, being committed to God, and his mission: so we persevere, waiting on the Lord for his appointed time; we do not grow tired of doing good; we worship the Lord and serve only him, who alone has authority over all the kingdoms, all the nations, every part, of the whole world.

Third, being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit at work within us, so others too may be transformed: we must not be like the proud, who do not have a right spirit within them, says Habakkuk; we must follow St Paul, sowing the Spirit so that we reap eternal life, for ourselves and others; like Jesus, we must let the Spirit inspire us, so our words and our actions may have eternal significance – so we bear the fruit that truly lasts (John 15:16).

Upon this basis of being Anchored, Committed, Transformed, we have developed this Mission Statement:

Across the diverse countries and cultures of our region, we seek:

- To honour God in worship that feeds and empowers us for faithful witness and service
- To embody and proclaim the message of God's redemptive hope and healing for people and creation
- To grow communities of faith that form, inform, and transform those who follow Christ

Believing this is the task to which we are called, we seek God's guidance on how we put flesh upon these bones and make them live – asking him to breathe into

them the life of his Spirit (cf. Ezekiel 37). Like Habakkuk, we await the Lord's answer – an answer for us to make plain, 'so a runner can read it', for sharing clearly across this Province.

So we identified eight priority areas and asked task teams to look at how the Province can support Diocesan life. As you discuss their reports, do not lose sight of the overarching context – that it is God's vision for God's church that we are trying to implement through them.

This is very different from the way that the world around us does so much of its planning – which reflects Jesus' temptations remarkably closely. For we are not seeking the vision of business, investors and economists: trying to maximise material gain – turning stones into bread. Nor are we seeking the vision of politicians, focussing on power – the status and authority of the kingdoms of this world. Nor are we seeking the vision of celebrity, of fame and popularity – preaching whatever so-called gospel best pulls in the crowds.

No. We trust ourselves to the God whose strength is made perfect in weakness, and worship him alone, who provides the bread of life with which we feed the hungry. Being truly Anchored, Committed, Transformed, means holding fast to Christ's love, the Father's mission and the Spirit's powerful directing. This is the heart of the agenda for this Synod.

But we must also look beyond our own walls. A self-absorbed, self-sufficient, church is soon a dead church, as the Church in Laodicea is warned in the Revelation to St John. So after addressing our common life and priority themes, I will consider our role within broader Christian and faith communities; within the Anglican Communion; and within the nations of our Province and the wider world.

ACSA Priorities

Our eight priority areas are:

- Liturgical renewal for transformative development
- Theological education
- Leadership formation
- Health, including HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria
- The environment
- Women and gender
- Protection and nurture of children and young people
- Public advocacy

Two further themes – transformation, and holistic mission rooted in a full commitment to evangelism – run through and undergird all these, rather than being matters to address separately. We must also keep in mind the imperatives of justice and reconciliation, gender equality, poverty, and youth.

Many of these themes relate to the daily bread-and-butter of Christian life and Christian leadership. These include urgent needs to nurture young Christians and to encourage vocations – especially to the ordained and religious life, and particularly among our young people. We must also train clergy and lay leaders, and develop a new generation of theological educators for the future.

But:

- unless we faithfully uphold daily Morning and Evening prayer,
- unless we root ourselves in Scripture,
- unless we feed regularly on the body and blood of Christ,
- unless we rely only and always upon God's leading and God's strengthening,

we are no better than any secular organisation. For our calling is to be channels of the transcendent power of God: his healing, his hope, his redemption, to his world. Only those who are truly Anchored in his love and Committed to his mission, can be agents of his Transforming promises.

Our Spiritual Calling

Liturgical renewal is therefore vital. Worship brings us close to God. We grow as Christians, and find our identity as Anglicans, through our relationship with him, more than anything else.

All of us, laity and clergy alike, must grow in discipleship if we are to respond faithfully to God's call. The disciplines of spiritual formation are not an option. Therefore we need residential training alongside diocesan schemes. I thank Revd Canon Dr Bill Domeris and Revd Canon Dr Peter Wyngaard for all they have done at the College of the Transfiguration and the Anglican House of Studies. We also wish Bill and Shona every blessing as he retires at the end of the year. I am glad to announce that Revd Prof Barney Pityana has been appointed interim Rector of COTT from 1 January 2011, with a specific mandate to oversee COTT's registration with the Council of Higher Education.

We must also help laity to apply a mature faith in every walk of life – especially those in positions of responsibility, whether in government and public service; the judiciary, or the media; in the education and health sectors; in business and wealth creation; or in local community organisations – so all can truly be salt and light.

Church Leadership

While within the church, we are not called to operate in the same way as secular leadership, we must certainly draw on the best examples, the highest standards, of the world around. Everyone to whom responsibility is trusted – clergy, wardens, diocesan staff, members of boards at every level, and especially where financial matters are concerned – must combine the highest ethical codes with the best of professional expertise. We cannot afford – literally, as well as metaphorically – to be well-intentioned amateurs. So we must, for example, follow the advice of King-III, in respect of good governance, accountability, transparency and honesty, as well as upholding all canonical obligations.

In this light, the Provincial Treasurer, Mr Rob Rogerson, reports that the Provincial Finance Sub-committee has been looking at the structures of our accounts, at better disclosure and increasing transparency and understanding. This is vital for examining whether we have value for money in our spending –

and also ensuring our spending patterns reflect our real priorities, and are geared towards our mission and ministry goals, including our Vision.

Travel is one area requiring particular attention. Budgets are set through juggling Provincial needs against Diocesan abilities to contribute. In the last five years, meetings and associated travel, especially by air, have cost significantly more than planned, and overruns carry forward with a ripple effect. In part, this is as a result of our successes, such as the birth of new dioceses, for which we thank God. But each new Diocese means extra delegates, which is expensive. We must also be mindful when electing members to various in-house and ecumenical bodies, that we are sensitive to the geographical location of meetings, to minimise costs.

We thank Rob and his staff for their hard work – not least in seeing the Pension Funds safely through the credit crunch.

Upholding God's Best

Sometimes in church life we fall short of what is expected of us. When this happens, we must also follow best practice. Therefore I am particularly grateful to Bishop Peter Lee, with the Provincial Registrar and the Deputy Registrar, for bringing to Synod draft measures to update and improve our canons on the Tenure of Clergy and Ecclesiastical Tribunals.

The Church has a very special relationship with its clergy, as well as all those entrusted to their care. We therefore need structures and practices that safeguard both, as far as possible.

In my August letter 'To the Laos – to the People of God', I set out more fully what this means. Ours is a God of infinite mercy and infinite justice – but not of 'cheap grace'. While God's offer of forgiveness is without limit, we must also take responsibility for our actions where this is appropriate. So we must always act with honesty and transparency; promoting fairness and restorative justice; not brushing things under the carpet but ensuring proper procedures take their course. We have a weighty responsibility to be God's salt, God's light, in his world.

To this end, we hold the Diocese of George in our particular prayers, as legal and civil procedures are pursued – these are very painful, but we must face them honestly and openly.

Growth and Development

But, thanks be to God, the great majority of our clergy are deeply faithful, doing so very much, for such little reward. Thanks to your dedication, we enjoy many signs of growth – in numbers, in spiritual depth – around our Province. We thank God for the building of his kingdom in this way. I have already mentioned new Dioceses – False Bay, Saldanha Bay, Ukhahlamba and Mbashe since our 2005 Synod. I am sure they will not be the last.

Earlier this year, I enjoyed attending the Anglican Students' Federation's 50th anniversary celebrations, and the Provincial Youth Council Consultation.

No-one meeting our young people could ever believe the accusation that Anglicans are dead and don't know the vibrant life of the Holy Spirit! We must listen to God speaking through them, taking to heart St Paul's words to Timothy that he should not let those who are older look down on him (1 Timothy 4:12).

Children and Young People

Did you know that about a quarter, 27%, of the world's population is aged 15 or under? Within ACSA, though that figure is only 19% in St Helena, elsewhere it ranges from 32%, about a third, in South Africa, rising to 46%, close to a half, in Angola. Children are not merely the church of tomorrow, they are the church of today. Nurturing our young people, not only spiritually, is therefore a vital priority. This goal must inform every debate we have. Frankly, Synod is appallingly unrepresentative on this score!

Gender

We are also hugely unrepresentative in relation to gender. As one motion notes, women constitute the majority in our pews, but the reverse is true at every level of leadership, lay and ordained. We are particularly blessed that so many women make a disproportionate contribution, as individuals, lay and ordained, and through bodies like the Mothers' Union and Anglican Women's Fellowship. Thank you, to all of you.

I am very glad that we have now established the Gender Desk, and we welcome Revd Cheryl Bird. Please note that it is a Gender desk, not a Women's desk. The roles of men and women alike, of every culture, were distorted by apartheid. We need to develop appropriate spiritualities for us all, for contemporary living, that are also channels of healing for the legacies of our brutalising history.

I want to name one unmentionable area that we must dare to tackle: the dehumanising effect of conscription on a generation of young men – barely more than boys. Many are still wounded from that time, and need to be able to speak and find healing. Our society makes this almost impossible. But before Jesus there are no taboo subjects.

I also want to challenge the St Bernard Mizeki Guild and the Church Men's Society to fresh reflection on what it means to be a Christian man in today's world – especially in being actively part of the solution to the unacceptably high levels of violence against women and children.

Let me briefly mention the request to the Synod of Bishops from three dioceses to consider our pastoral care of those in same-gender Civil Unions, now legal under South African law, and those in polygamous relationships. A working group prepared papers for an initial discussion in the Synod of Bishops. This is a very sensitive matter, with wide-ranging implications (ranging from baptism policies to legal obligations), and we are going to proceed slowly, 'on our knees'. Please keep us in your prayers.

Health and Social Development

Let me now turn to the remarkable work we are doing as a Province in areas of social development and health, especially HIV and AIDS, malaria and TB.

I must pay considerable tribute to Bishop David Beetge for his dedication here, as in so many other areas. During Synod we shall miss his wisdom, experience, deep spirituality, and his generous humour keenly. We thank God for his life, and send Carol our love and prayers. We also thank God for Bishop Les Walker, and send Marian our love and prayers. We send heartfelt condolences to the family of Judge Tholakele Madala, giving thanks for his wise counsel as Deputy Chancellor of the Province, and within the Diocese of Mthatha. Names of other members of Synod who have died since our last meeting will appear in the record.

Both the Anglican AIDS and Healthcare Trust, and Hope Africa have had to weather the global economic storms and face reductions in funding. I thank Bishops Jo Seoka and Merwyn Castle, as well as Mr Sabelo Mashwama and Canon Delene Mark, for all they continue to achieve, in partnership with our Dioceses. Hope Africa's move to the same site as the Trust will, I hope, enable synergies that help maximise the efficient use of resources. Yet the church's greatest resource, and its greatest treasure, will always remain its people, so developing capacity and empowering volunteers remains central to our strategy. This will be at the heart of next month's South African National Conference on Religion and Public Health, of which the Minister of Health and I are joint patrons. Our focus is 'Comprehensive Educational Role in Primary Health Care – Strengthening Responses to Preventable Diseases'.

I also encourage our private sectors to fill gaps left by withdrawing international donors. Companies should look beyond using social responsibility programmes to leverage advertising opportunities, and focus where needs are greatest.

The World Around Us

This brings me to the Church's role beyond our walls, and our need to speak truth to power, and to pursue social justice and good governance in every form. Let me mention two particular concerns within our Province, where we cannot remain silent.

The first is democracy within Swaziland, where power and wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, and political debate is hardly permitted. Bishop Meshack, our whole Province stands in solidarity with you, as you declare Christ's gospel of good news to the poor and liberty to the oppressed.

The second is the freedom of the press within South Africa, where the Protection of Information Bill actually threatens to undermine a range of Constitutional rights.

Raising our voices so our message is heard is often best done in partnership with others, especially Christians, and those of other faiths. One such body is the South African Council of Churches. We congratulate Bishop Jo

on his recent election as President. This is a big task, as the SACC works on re-finding its focus and voice, which is so vital within South Africa's public life. We thank Bishops Jo and Peter, and everyone else who represents our Province in ecumenical and other bodies, including the Church Unity Commission, with whom we are challenged to consider how we can deepen our common life.

We also look forward to the 3rd Lausanne Congress in Cape Town later this month, and particularly the pre-conference meeting of Anglican participants, which is being jointly run by the Anglican Communion's Evangelism and Church Growth Initiative and our own Growing the Church team.

There is time only to speak briefly of other events around our world. Christ called us to love our neighbours as ourselves, and we must continue to hold Zimbabwe, and the Anglican church there, in our particular prayers. I remain in close touch with the Bishop of Harare, offering what support we can and am thankful for Bishop Rubin's pastoral care and support for Zimbabweans.

The presence of Bishop Duracin reminds us we must not forget the plight of Haiti. Following the accounts that I and Revd Canon Robert Butterworth wrote of our visit following the devastating earthquake, I am glad to report that we are establishing partnership links between schools, and have agreed to train a Haitian cleric for 3 years at COTT and a further year at the Anglican House of Studies.

We must also think global and act local in relation to safeguarding our planet; doing what we can within our homes and churches, our communities, and our work-places. We must also press for a comprehensive and just outcome at COP17 – the UN's 17th Conference of the Parties, on Climate Change – being held in South Africa next year.

The Anglican Communion

In his Pentecost letter to the Anglican Communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, speaks of us as having 'not fully received the Pentecostal gift of mutual understanding for common mission'. The differences that focus around questions of human sexuality continue to be very real, very difficult. ACSA must contribute what we can to the painful debate, not least from our own experiences of dealing with vast diversity. I am therefore glad that ACSA was effectively represented at the Global South 4th Encounter earlier this year, and that 10 Bishops attended the All African Anglican Bishops Conference in Uganda last month.

For us, what has mattered most is being centred on Christ; agreeing on the central matters of who Jesus is and the salvation he brings; and therefore recognising one another as being united in him, and, in consequence, with each other. In consequence, as we have found within the Synod of Bishops, when differences arise, none of us feels called to say to another 'I no longer consider you a Christian, a brother in Christ, a member of the body of Christ – I am no longer in communion with you.' It is as if we see the marks of the living Christ, who is also the suffering Christ, in one another and in our common life. We find ourselves more closely bound together in our soreness, as we await the power of

the resurrection within our painful circumstances. My prayer is that the Covenant can help the whole Communion rediscover one another in Christ, encountering him at the foot of the cross in this way.

We must not expect the Covenant to be perfect, or deliver instant solutions to shattered relationships. But it certainly offers a way of affirming our desire to live together as Provinces, within our global family, through an autonomy that is neither imposed uniformity, nor unbounded independence. Rather, we seek appropriate interdependence, lived in 'bonds of affection'. It is, you might say, a framework for expressing St Paul's apparent paradox of both bearing one another's burdens, and carrying our own loads!

We need to share our unique experiences of letting Christ hold us together in difference, within the life of the Covenant, and help it to work as well as possible. Meanwhile, we must not divert time and energy from the core mission and ministry of the Anglican Communion, including the functioning of its Instruments of Communion, commissions, networks and other bodies – including, for example, the Mission to Seamen, where we should take greater ownership of the opportunities afforded us. (Here let me thank Bishop Paddy Glover, liaison Bishop for the Mission to Seaman, for all he does as Dean of the Province, especially in supporting me.)

We look forward to welcoming to Cape Town the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order in November, and congratulate the Revd Sarah Rowland Jones – our Synod preacher, and my researcher – on her appointment to the Communion's highest 'theological think tank'. We thank Revd Canon Janet Trisk, Ms Nomfundo Walaza and her successor Mrs Louisa Mojela for representing us in the Anglican Consultative Council, and pray for Janet in her weighty responsibilities on the Communion's Standing Committee.

Conclusion

Let me sum up this wide-ranging review of the life of our Province with a question: What is my hope for this Synod, and the outcome of our time together? Well, I long to see our Vision embraced enthusiastically, and for us to work hard together to breathe life into it – so that in responding to God's call to mission, we can enhance a comprehensive response within our Dioceses to the many serious inter-relating spiritual and socio-economic challenges that we each face across our vast and varied Province.

Finally, let me end with some personal reflections.

I was recently walking in the garden with my two dogs, pondering the vocation to Christian leadership. When I sat down near the stream, two Egyptian geese rushed at me, squawking furiously. They would not stop. One even flew at my head. Then I realised that the younger dog had a baby goose in his mouth. Fortunately he released it unhurt, and it rejoined its brothers and sisters in the stream. We moved away and the family was reunited. The two parent geese had fearlessly taken on what must have seemed like three giants who had

come between them and their family, but they were determined to care for their children at all costs.

Since moving to Bishopscourt, I have often felt faced by giants – difficult challenges I never expected, heavy expectations laid upon me, travel to everywhere from Haiti's devastation to the presence of Kings and Presidents. Yet this is not because I am Thabo, but because I am God's child, called by him to a particular task for the sake of his church, his world.

He has put around me people – family, colleagues, staff, friends – and structures (of which Morning and Evening Prayer and the daily Eucharist are central) to remind me continually that this is God's business. So I rely on him for courage to face the giants, and to guide me in what I say and do. Indeed, I have become grateful that often when I feel stretched too far, and inadequate for the task, in this way he forces me to keep depending on him. I have found that his grace is indeed sufficient in my weakness. He is my Anchor. To him I am Committed. And in his love, I find the Transformation I need for living out the vision he puts before me.

Let us dare to do the same, as a Province – to be Anchored, Committed and Transformed, so we may be, in Habakkuk's words, 'the righteous, who live by their faith.'

Amen