



Anglican Church of Southern Africa
Diocese of Grahamstown

The Bishop of Grahamstown
The Rt Reverend Ebenezer St Mark Ntlali

P O Box 181 • Grahamstown • South Africa • 6140 • email: bishop@grahamstowndiocese.org.za
Tel. Home (+27) (0)46-622 2500 Office (+27) (0)46-636 1996 • Fax (+27) (0)46-622 5231

13 December 2022

CHRISTMAS PASTORAL LETTER
BY THE RT REVD EBENEZER ST MARK NTLALI
BISHOP OF GRAHAMSTOWN

Dear People of God

CHRISTMAS PASTORAL LETTER

We greet you all with joy in the wonderful Name of Christ, who came to this world to save us. As we prepare this letter we are steadily moving towards the end of the season of Advent and Christmas.

We thank God and the Lord Jesus Christ in the Spirit that we, as a Diocese could come back to worship God in person. We also thank God for the unceasing love and support of the Diocesan Family.

As we have finished the 16 days of activism of violence against women and children, we add our voice to the world as we are called to understand that we are all created in God's image. We also pray for the men folk who are subjected to gender violence.

The Season of Christmas and especially Christmas Day is one of the highlights of the Christian Calendar. Christmas day is the day people from different faiths know about. It is celebrated at the end of the year at a time most people look forward to. It is a time to celebrate and be happy. However, most of us are feeling exhausted and might not have lots of energy to celebrate as the past year seemed to have raced past us. It was the first year where things started to return to what we can describe as 'normal' after Covid-19. It seems as if the whole world agreed that we will do our best to try and catch up with what we could not complete or do during the past two years. We were trying to catch up, although we were all carrying the impact of covid-19 with its many losses and changes.

When we look at our world people might ask whether there is something to celebrate and be joyful about? The answer is, "Yes!" As Christians we are joyful about the hope which Christmas offers – hope that things can change; hope because God enters and transforms – God brings light which darkness cannot put out. God came to our earth through the birth of the small baby Jesus who grew and became the Saviour of the world. This gift came through the ordinary and changed the world. Jesus came with simplicity – being born in a stable to a young girl named Mary and an adoptive father named Joseph who was a carpenter.

Through Jesus, the Christ we are one with God and God with us. God is in us and we are in God. God is present and God's love, peace and joy is abundantly available to each of us whenever and wherever we become aware of it.

We have a choice. We can focus on the negativity around us which is readily available. Everywhere people are ready to see and talk about the darkness. However, we also have the Light of the world with us and within us. Children can assist us to connect with the joy of Christ within and find happiness and joy in small things if we struggle to find joy. Each of us were children at some stage of our lives. We were excited watching the Christmas tree with a twinkle in our eyes and laughed and giggled at the sight of a gift – how small or ordinary.

As we celebrate the Christmas season, may we remember and have joy. “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (KJV Luke 2:11).

May we can choose to focus on the positive and be reminded of the light which the season represent. As we light our lights on the Christmas tree, may we can choose to remember that all is not dark and sombre and choose to experience the joy and hope which Jesus' birth brought to this world. May we be able to see light and hope in the ordinary and simple this Christmas. May we laugh with our children and experience joy.

We wish you all a blessed Christmas Season with light, hope and lots of joy.

Grace and peace

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bishop of Grahamstown', written in a cursive style.

BISHOP OF GRAHAMSTOWN

**Christ has no body on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours.
Ours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion for the world is to look out;
ours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good; and ours are the hands with which
He is to bless us now. (St Teresa de Avila)**