



Anglican Church of Southern Africa
Diocese of Grahamstown

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9 January 2023

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

Dear People of God

Warm Epiphany greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to our Diocesan Family from us and the entire Ntlali Family.

As a Diocese God has blessed us with another opportunity – another year to experience the joy of Christmas. We were able to celebrate and preach at the Cathedral and experience a lovely service as we witnessed families gathering to spend precious family time together. It is wonderful to know that Christmas Day services were held all over the Diocese. We thank God for blessing us with this opportunity to meet in person – to look each other in the eye and hug as we share God’s love.

Time continues to move forward and we have moved through Christmas Day and the Season of Christmas into the Feast of the Epiphany and the Season of the Epiphany. “The Season of Epiphany is started by the Feast of the Epiphany (6 January) – also known as ‘Three Kings Day’ and ends at the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord (2 February)” (Lectionary 2023: 15). However, some parts of the Church would extend the Season of Epiphany till the beginning of Lent.

The word ‘epiphany’ comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, meaning “manifestation” or “appearance.” Epiphany therefore refers to the appearance of Jesus the Christ as the Saviour of the world—of all people. Therefore, the Feast and Season of Epiphany is associated with the visitation of ‘wise men’ of Matthew 2:1–12. Christ was “manifested to humankind, to the world and to the entire creation” (Lectionary 2020:15)

As God used Gentiles in the story of Matthew to share the news of the birth of Jesus the Christ, God often uses the most unlikely people and situations to share the Good News. God cannot be boxed in, although we sometimes want to do that. We think that our understanding of God is the ‘right’ and only one. We need to remember that as Anglicans who have a diverse spectrum of understanding and we are encouraged to embrace this diversity. God sets the example and God moves beyond race, cultures, languages, politics, and geographical boundaries to move the hearts of people. May we during the Season of Epiphany be willing to share the Good News to all people – to cross boundaries and allow God’s light to shine through us especially in the places of darkness in our communities.

Our communities are challenged by alcohol and drug abuse; by violence and crime. These social challenges have a negative impact on our family and our community life and have the potential to separate us from each other. May we, during this New Year, live in awareness of God who is greater than all of these challenges we face and may God move us to be stronger and bigger lights in this world.

Like Mary, we are called to respond positively to the small voice of God within each of us. We are called to hold the tension between what is happening on the outside in our communities and what is happening on the inside in our hearts gently in prayer and intercede for our world.

God wants to use every one of us as God used the 'wise men' to share the Good News of hope to the world. May we during this Season of Epiphany and throughout the whole world strive to respond to God's call and cross boundaries and to share God's message of hope and love to our broken world.

We are also called by God in Christ Jesus in the spirit of the Epiphany to practise our stewardship which means surrendering our lives, time, talents, our strengths and our resources to the mission of God in Christ Jesus through the Church.

We wish you, once again, everything of the best for the year that lies ahead, and that God may renew our strengths and our vision in the Lord.

Grace and peace



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)