



Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Diocese of Grahamstown

The office of the Vicar-General

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AD CLERUM

Greetings: Greetings to the Diocesan Family

We give thanks to God for the gift of family. My family is still blessed with all we need to do God's work.

1. Archbishop Thabo

We give thanks to God for the leadership of Archbishop Thabo, that he exercises over ACSA and all Dioceses whose Sees are vacant. He spent last week in Rome at a Primates Meeting. We thank God for travelling mercies. Yesterday he consecrated Bishop Sobantwana as the third bishop of Christ the King.

2. **DIOCESAN APPEAL:** The last few weeks I have been engaging with the leadership of the Diocese, Stipendary Clergy, Rectors and Guilds concerning the financial state of our Diocese. We placed before them our budget and parish performance schedule. The discussions were very constructive and we received very valuable contributions that have contributed to the development of short term plans. The resolutions were as follows:

a) Send out a team of **Diocesan Workers** to non-and under-performing parishes. The purpose will be to listen to the Parish leadership, look at their financial management tools, advise on budgeting and planning. They will submit a report with recommendations per parish. This will assist us in determining the viability of parishes.

b) October month be declared a **Stewardship and Giving Month**.

This time

c) **Appeal** to parishioners for financial support. We would like to appeal to individual parishioners to give generously towards this appeal. The appeal is necessitated by the dire financial position of the Diocese. The current situation is as a result of parishes not paying their dues to the Diocese. Every year there is an under-collection of more than R1 million rands. This under-collection has forced us to ask the Diocesan Trustboard to assist us. The withdrawals have now reached unacceptable proportions. In 2022 a decision was taken not to approach the Trustsboard but to intensify our call for parishes to pay their dues. This, unfortunately, led to our inability to pay clergy stipends on time as we had to call parishes and remind them to pay. Other parishes are struggling and rely on their Patronal Festivals. This does not assist the Diocese. We are expected to meet our financial obligations every month. The Parish Assessment

helps us pay clergy stipends inclusive of tax and Pensions, Workman Compensation, Provincial Assessment and Municipal Charges and Episcopal Ministry and other office expenditure. Concerning Pensions the diocese is expected to pay about R100 000 a month to the Pension Fund. This has not been possible because we are only able to collect enough money to pay Stipends, Insurance and Medical Aid. We are forced to rethink this prioritisation. Pensions will be the second priority.

All parishes are expected to contribute towards the Diocesan Medical Aid. We are aware that in the Private and Public Sectors individuals make their choices concerning the Medical Aid. Even there, if you do not have it, you are considered unwise. In the Diocese it is corporate in character. We are expected to pay R192 000 a month to cover our stipendary clergy, retired clergy and Diocesan Staff. We hardly collect R70 000 for this purpose. Any non-payment of the Medical Aid places the lives of these beneficiaries at great risk. We implore all parishes to support this benefit. The Insurance is an obligation no parish should disregard but, a number of our parishes fail to keep up with their Insurance Payments.

Identify areas for reduction of expenditure. This area has seen us delay the filling of Vacant posts. We have a number of critical vacant posts e.g. Sub-Dean who is also the Cathedral Chancellor and Dean of Studies, Finance Manager, Canon Xintolo graciously accepted the position without a salary. She is only given an honorarium that is not even a third of what the former Finance Manager used to get. Our Receptionist/messenger/Cleaner left us last year and the Diocesan Office is without such a crucial person. Some of our parishes that used to have Stipendary Clergy are now led by Non-Stipendary Clergy. This indicates an attempt from the administration to reduce expenditure. We need to replenish our investments in the Trustsboard which continued to inject money into the Diocesan Account to mitigate the effects of Covid-19. We now need to focus on replenishing our reserves.

APPEAL. It is for that reason that we implore all of you to join hands with us in mobilising resources to address our challenges. The first appeal is geared towards paying our ACSA Pension Fund. We ask each parishioner to contribute a minimum of R150 towards this initiative. Please use the month of October for Stewardship and Giving. These contributions should be deposited in the following account:

Name: Diocese of Grahamstown Call Account

Bank: First National Bank

Acc. Number: 61232002024

Ref. D/A2023 Name and Surname

If the money is collected by parishes then the reference should be the Name of the parish.

The Diocesan guilds committed themselves to encourage their members to contribute. It should be clear that a person is requested to pay once during this time. You are not expected to give to the Parish and the guild as well. This effort will be in operation until the end of November 2023. Those parishes and individuals who want to deposit now are welcome to do so. Please keep your Proof of Payment. A small committee made up of both clergy and laity will be established to drive, monitor and account on this appeal. It is our wish that this initiative be successful so that we can address this challenge.

- d) To alleviate the financial strain on people we have appealed to all Diocesan Guilds to hold in abeyance all conferences for six months so that people can focus on giving to their parishes. This means that there should be no conferences from October 2023 to March 2024. During this time we request that parishes work on the giving of their members. If we can receive all Diocesan Dues we would be able to meet our obligations. This request does not mean that guilds should not ask for subscriptions from their members. It says that all guilds must ensure that people give to the Parish first. Guilds can hold their opening Services. Parishes can continue with their Patronal Festivals.

3. Allowances

It has come to our attention that there is a need to clarify the issue of allowances for our clergy. I would like to refer Rector's and Churchwardens to the following:

- i) Rector's Letter of appointment. That letter informs the Parish about everything that they are responsible for and what the Diocese will be responsible for.
- ii) The Acts of the Diocese. Chapter V.11.a, b and c needs to be read together with the Handbook for Churchwardens and Parish Councillors. It will be clear from these that the Diocese has never been responsible for allowances. When parishes do not pay these allowances their clergy might not be able to discharge their responsibilities. The Diocese is not able to carry such allowances at all as it is still trying to stabilise its finances.

4. Churchwardens' meeting

We plan to hold a Churchwardens' meeting together with Rectors and Treasurers on Saturday 11 November 2023 at St Saviour's, East London starting at 10h00. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the performance of parishes but also deal with some relevant Canons and Acts.

I appeal to all of us to pray for our Diocese to find ways and means of generating enough finances to meet its obligations. I believe that if we allow the Diocese to reset for 6 months we might see some improvement.

5. Elective Assembly

I am aware that a letter indicating that there will be no Elective Assembly on the 18 November has reached your Rectors. This is meant to give the Diocese an opportunity to produce a credible turnaround plan and also undertake several initiatives to pay the Pension and Trustboard. Accompanying this letter is an analysis that portrays a clear picture of the state of our finances. I would like to re-iterate, if all parishes consistently paid what was due from them we would not be in this situation. During this month and November teams will be visiting parishes and Archdeaconries to afford people an opportunity to ask questions and propose solution.

Once more we ask each parishioner to pray for our Diocese and all those called upon to give more, do so. Our request is for all of us to stand together and contribute to the improvement of our Diocese in all respects.

There will be a PASTORAL letter by the Archbishop when he returns from his overseas trip. It will contain more information on interventions to be implemented during the six months.

Yours in Christ

BTM Mfenyana (Ven)
Vicar-General
Diocese 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)*