



DIOCESE OF THE HIGHVELD

DIOCESAN, PARISH AND CLERGY NEWS for WEDNESDAY 13th – 27th MAY 2020

Mission of the Diocese of the Highveld
To be a unified Diocese where the spiritual growth of an increasing number of people is fulfilled through experiencing the fullness of God

From Archbishop Thabo Makgoba

Dear Parishioners, Clergy and Bishops

With no end in sight to coronavirus lockdowns, we are having to plan ahead for Provincial meetings to take place online. Already, retired bishops are communicating on WhatsApp, as are members of the Synod of Bishops. Other groups are being encouraged to connect and pray together online, and Liaison Bishops are meeting with bodies such as the youth, Provincial organisations and the like.

Now our legal team, the Provincial Executive Officer, the Ven Horace Arenz, and the Provincial Treasurer, Rob Rogerson, have worked out a way in which we can hold “virtual” meetings of the Synod of Bishops and Provincial Standing Committee in September. More planning for the PSC will take place in an online meeting of its Service Committee this week.

As South Africa enters a new level of lockdown, we face a difficult path ahead. We are having to adjust to the reality that the virus will be with us for a long while to come, and that to balance the need to save people's lives with the necessity of preserving their livelihoods, we have to relax some of the restrictions - even as the epidemiologists are projecting an increase in Covid-19 cases that will likely peak in late August or early September.

As two of our leading experts, Professor Salim Abdool Karim and Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim, [said recently](#), there is no way of stopping the virus from spreading. Instead, they warn, we have to find a way to live with outbreaks, trying to “flatten the curve” when they happen, while the government adjusts lockdown levels as part of a risk-adjusted approach to mitigate their effects. As President Ramaphosa said in his latest address to the nation, adjustments will be made according to the rate of infection in an area and the state of readiness and capacity of its health facilities to cope with treating infections.

For the Church, learning to live with the coronavirus means developing our own risk-adjusted approach to returning to worship. Over recent weeks, I have been heading a task team of church leaders put together by the SA Council of Churches which has done a thorough examination of when and how we can reopen our churches. The SACC has had constructive encounters with government, at which we have been represented by our bishops in the Gauteng dioceses, and we look forward to an agreement on the conditions under which we can open our doors again. We cannot stay in lockdown in perpetuity.

In the meantime, I urge you as parishioners to continue to give whatever financial and material

support you are able to our ongoing ministry. Today I joined a meeting of the Deans of cathedrals in ACSA and heard some of their challenges, as well as the innovations which these senior clerics are effecting. I am grateful for their ministry. Another part of my rhythm is keeping up with young people. I was most encouraged by their postings this last weekend, and how they are keeping hope alive. At the invitation of Father Chesnay Frantz of Cape Town I have shared a two-minute message for them to help them keep up their hope.

The most distressing sights during the lockdowns have been the long queues of people lining up for food parcels. HOPE Africa and a number of dioceses have been working hard to alleviate hunger and the Deputy Provincial Registrar, Canon Rosalie Manning, has helped to access more resources as we partner with others in feeding programmes. We also support the SACC's efforts to advocate making food vouchers available, which both feed those in need as well as generate business for traders and thus support livelihoods.

Despite the challenges, I pray that we will keep up hope for the future even as we work through the reality of the pandemic, however long it takes. Hope, as Denise Ackermann has written, "is not that blithe sense that all will end well". Hope is about acknowledging our fears, dealing with the pain, the reality and the uncertainty brought about by the coronavirus. It is a journey beset with headaches, a journey with and in Christ and during which we know for certain that He is not here in the grave, but He has gone ahead of us. Hope is the story of our salvation, our lives lived with the assurance that "The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this." (1 Thess. 5:24)

During this time, I have begun to join Archbishop Emeritus Desmond once a week in prayer, and have found it strengthening. I urge you too to pray without ceasing, and as we move towards Ascension Day, I want to challenge you: what are you planning to do as we move into the next season in the Church's rhythms of worship and celebration?

God bless you.

#Thabo

➤ **Church Unity Commission:**

Dear Friends

The 21st May 2020 is Ascension Day. It also begins the week of prayer for Christian/Church unity which concludes on Pentecost Sunday. Material to be used in this week by congregations have been sent and we encourage local congregations to organize combined ecumenical services. Local congregations have been creative during this time making use of the social media to keep in touch with their members and to keep the Sunday services going. We encourage them to continue this way and emphasize prayer for unity and reconciliation and ecumenical/combined services particularly on Ascension Day and throughout the week leading to Pentecost Sunday, making use of the material provided.

This year the Church Unity Commission arranged ecumenical service for us all to share in, as we celebrate Ascension Day. Below find the link & password to access the recorded service:

Share recording with viewers:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/2uBwKL6spnJIG7fT80PDX6czP4DaT6a8gSIX-qBeyUuL1Gd-ZZZFZlnzQ9uXPem>

Password:

As we join together and display Christian Unity we are all encouraged to share the recording on our various social media platforms with our congregations.

Grace and Peace



Gazette:

➤ **The Diocesan Office:** Closed until further notice.

➤ **From the Administrator's desk:**

➤ **Unidentified Items:**

The following deposit has been made with no proper reference:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Reference</u>
28/02/2020	R4140.00	ST PETERS

➤ **Happy birthday to:**

13th Zanele Mhlungu
17th Fr Reuben Simelane
25th Maserame Sonti

15th Fr Mpho Masekela
24th Bishop Charles May
26th Fr Vuyisile Sonti