

The Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist

(Anglican Church of Southern Africa in Limpopo)
 Bishop: Martin Breytenbach
martin@stmark.org.za
 Tel: 015 297 3297 Fax 015 297 0408
 Secretary at Diocesan Centre: jacky@stmark.org.za
 Diocesan Administrator: administrator@stmark.org.za



P.O Box 643
 Polokwane, 0700

06 February 2016

To All: Clergy
 Churchwardens
 Leaders of Organisations
 Diocesan Youth Council

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ. He fasted in the desert to seek his Father's will for his mission and ministry, and calls us to seek him specially during the season of Lent.

My Commitment to You

As many of you know, Both Dean Luke and I were nominated for the election of the Bishop of Pretoria last week. The Dean of Pretoria, Allan Kannemeyer, was elected. He is a good man and Luke and I both give thanks for his election. You don't *apply* to be a Bishop – you are nominated! Neither of us *wanted* to leave the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist, but both of us believed, after prayer, that God was calling us to be available to him and the church if needed in Pretoria. Allan is a good man, and we have both been in contact with him to offer our love, support and prayers.

Now I am happy to assure you of my commitment to continue to serve God and you, and I know Luke feels the same way. As I have told many of you before, I plan to retire when I am 65 in 2019 or 2020 (which would not have been possible had I gone to Pretoria), and have all sorts of ideas about what I would like to do then (music, writing etc). So I have a few years to finish what God has called me to do here, and empower and equip people to lead the Diocese forward in ministry and mission.

I love you; you have been a great blessing to me over the last 16 years; and I will continue to serve God in the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist and Anglican Church of Southern Africa with all the strength and joy that he gives me.

Youth Camp and Youth Discipleship

As has been our custom over the last few years, we had a Diocesan Youth Camp in December 2015. The theme was a "One Choice Encounter" and our aim was to help our young people make wise choices about their faith, careers, money and possessions and relationships, including choosing the right partner in marriage. Initially we were expecting a team to lead us from Sabah in Malaysia, but they were unable to make it in the end. Nevertheless we lined up (we thought) a good team of leaders and speakers, from inside and outside the Diocese.

1 Thank You

Let me start with the positives. Thank you to the Diocesan Youth Council team who worked really hard to prepare for the camp, together with Diocesan Youth Chaplain Kwena Makgoka. Some of the adult leaders

Diocesan Vision: To make disciples in vibrant, self-sufficient congregations established and linked to each other by sharing in resources; ministry & service; outreach & evangelism.

(like Rev Ron Reiners) who came on the camp also joined them in working hard throughout the weekend to try to make a success of it.

Unfortunately, however, the reports I have received show that the camp was **not** successful at all. There are a number of reasons for this that I will share below. But let me say upfront that I have decided that **I will not agree to another Diocesan Youth Camp this year**. We need to return to the focus we had when we started the Diocesan Youth Ministry a few years ago: **making young disciples**.

2 What Went Wrong

I visited the camp for a while on the Saturday morning, and saw some evidence of what a number of people have reported to me. One thing that has become clear to me is that **those who organise events like this need a lot of help to plan and arrange things properly** – although many of them did their best, it fell far short. I am not writing all this because I want to expose or embarrass our youth and their leaders, but because our adult Church leaders need to wake up and give better supervision, guidance and support to our young people.

2.1 Unexpected Arrivals

I am told that about 100 young people arrived at Emmerentia Geldenhuys camp site without having registered beforehand. This shows total disrespect for the organisers and camp site owners on the part of parish leaders who sent them! It meant that there was a crisis: not enough space, beds or food to accommodate everyone. Surely we can do better than that!

2.2 Abandoned By Youth Consultant

I am not sure why, but the Diocesan Youth Consultant, who was supposed to be guiding and helping the DYC, abandoned that camp on the first afternoon. He took the camp money with him and only returned that the next day. He apparently informed some of the speakers not to come because the camp was being “cancelled”! So some of the planned teaching could not happen. I won’t name him to avoid embarrassment, but that it not what I expect from a leader. Clearly there was some conflict between him and the youth leaders, but surely, as disciples of Christ, we can find better ways to deal with it!

2.3 Poor Timekeeping and Disorganised Catering

Partly because of the two issues above, there was not enough food for everyone, so DYC members had to keep rushing to town to buy more. That disrupted the catering and made the meals late, and there was still insufficient food. And when meals are late, everything is affected: talks are late or cancelled. When I was there at tea time on the Saturday morning, they had only just had breakfast.

There were last minute changes to the programme. When I was there the young people were just hanging around doing nothing. Some speakers who had prepared talks were not able to give them, or had their time limited.

2.4 Events Not Planned

It is also clear that many of the events were not properly planned. One of the guest teams from Gauteng needed a data projector – but no one had organised one. So they couldn’t do their presentation properly. As far as I can tell, the fun and games events were not organised at all.

2.5 Littering

Our young people left litter lying all over the place despite the presence of rubbish bins. That shows disrespect for the environment, the conference centre and one another.

2.6 Racist Comments

There were a few people of minority racial groups at the camp – some to help and serve. They have told me about unkind, racially based, comments that were made about them and to them. One wrote to me that this does not leave him with much hope for the future of South Africa! How sad, and this at a Christian camp!

2.7 Disrespect for Speakers

All the reports I have received have mentioned disrespect for the speakers. I understand that some talks are not that good, or go on too long... But it is never ok just to ignore them and hold loud conversations among one another while talks are in progress!

2.8 Lack of Discipline

I am told that some of our young people didn't even bother to come to some of the sessions. Others (and this is inevitable among young people I guess) had to be sent home because of drunkenness. How sad it is that some young people need to try to show what big deals they are by getting drunk!

3 What Can We Do?

Youth ministry is always full of ups and downs, and I want to emphasise that we have many wonderful young people in the Diocese. I meet them week by week, and see that many of them are serious about becoming true disciples of Jesus and serving him with their lives. At present we have three wonderful Youth Interns who are serving God in different ways, receiving training, and exploring a possible call from God to the ordained ministry. But it seems to me that, at this time, a Diocesan Youth Camp, does not help with this process.

As I wrote at the beginning, we need to refocus on **making young disciples**. Then, if and when we do have another Diocesan Youth Camp, **it will be by invitation and only for those who are genuine disciples of Christ**.

So I want to challenge every parish to look seriously at how can we help our young people to grow as disciples. Here are some examples:

- ✦ **Take on a promising, committed young person, who feels called to serve God, as an Intern and Youth Pastor.** The Diocesan VIP (Volunteer and Intern Programme) team can help you with that.
- ✦ Ask some of your best people to run **Rooted in Jesus Groups** with your young people. We have more than enough people who have been trained, and are strengthening the Diocesan RinJ team to give them guidance and support.
- ✦ Make sure that some of your best, most committed adult members are **overseeing youth and young people's groups**.
- ✦ **Give your young people opportunities** to grow by leading services and preaching from time to time, and show them how to do it. Let them "shadow" people like Priests, Churchwardens, Parish Council members and Lay Ministers to learn how these things are done.

Dear friends, it is vital that we get our ministry to and with young people right. The Youth Camp showed me that we are falling short at the moment. Let us give some serious thought, prayer and planning to this – and then put it into action. The health and future of the church depends on it!

Yours in Christ,

†Martin

†Martin: St Mark the Evangelist