

The Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist

(Anglican Church of Southern Africa in Limpopo)

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To All: Clergy
Churchwardens
Leaders of Organisations
Diocesan Youth Council

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ, who accepted his Father's call to give himself in mission, ministry and service – and to die and rise again for us.

An Unusual Ad Clerum!

This is an unusual Ad Clerum, based on my unusual DSC report last November, because it deals mainly with things that affect me personally – although they will also have a big impact on the life of the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist.

1 Colleen and I Got Married!

14th October in Cape Town and 28th October in Polokwane



Colleen and me with our Marriage Certificate at Christ Church Kenilworth on 14th October



Colleen and me on our wedding "thrones" at Christ Church Cathedral Polokwane on 28th October

The whole of 2017 was an amazing one for me, as Colleen and I got engaged officially in February and then prepared for our wedding in October. It was a year of getting to know one another at a distance, making plans and getting ready for Colleen to move to Polokwane. Thank you for understanding why I was a bit distracted for much of the time!

Thank you also for the wonderful celebration at Christ Church Cathedral! Dean Luke and the organising team did amazing work, and many of our parishes gave generous donations towards the costs and as a wedding

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

gift. **Thank you!** Most of the gifts have gone towards our “Mission and Travel Fund”, which will enable Colleen and me to travel together. Already we have two trips planned for this year:

- ✦ **To Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur) and Singapore** for a meeting of the “*Jesus Shaped Life*” (JSL) Group – the International oversight group for the Anglican Communion’s Season of Discipleship and Disciple-Making: from 22nd April to 2nd May.
- ✦ **To the Diocese of Niassa in Mozambique** as part of a team with Dr Alison Morgan to lead three Rooted in Jesus training Conferences: from 28th October to 12th November.

For the rest of the year we want to be here in Limpopo – for my final year as Bishop of the Diocese.

Thank you also for the welcome that Colleen has received whenever she has been with me on visits to our parishes. She really feels celebrated as our new Mma-Bishop! She is planning to join me this year in my travels around the Diocese.

Although each of us was married for around 30 years, we are still a newly married couple! So we are learning how to live together, working out routines, and amalgamating two households into one. We love spending time reading the Bible together and praying. We enjoy sharing in mission and ministry. It is exciting, fun and challenging. We value your ongoing support and prayers.



Bishop and Mma-Bishop with our grandchildren

2 Synod of Bishops Agreed to My Retirement Date

Synod of Bishops last September agreed to my proposed retirement date of 28th February 2019. That will be just after I turn 65, and I will be into my 20th year as Bishop of the Diocese. Ever since my election I have felt that this would be the right time to step down, unless God clearly led otherwise. I want to finish while I am still enthusiastic and energetic, and before I am too old and tired!

After my retirement we hope to move to Colleen’s home in Cape Town, and to continue to be involved in ministry and mission:

- ✦ Making music and leading worship together
- ✦ Going on mission if and when invited
- ✦ Writing – I think I have a few books in my head!
- ✦ Mentoring and encouraging young disciples
- ✦ Continuing to serve Growing the Church and Anglicans Ablaze as required
- ✦ Being parents and grandparents...

And who knows what God has planned for us?!

So that means that this will be my last full year in the Diocese – my visits to the various parishes with Colleen will probably be my last! It also means that we need to start preparing and praying for the election of a new Diocesan Bishop in 2019.

2.1 My Last Year as Diocesan Bishop

There are three specific goals that I have in mind for this year:

- 1) Continue what we have started, and in particular
 - ✦ Strengthen our parishes and multiply those that are too big;
 - ✦ Train leaders at every level – Clergy, Lay Ministers, Church Councils, Youth Leaders...
 - ✦ Make disciples, with a special emphasis on young people.
- 2) Make sure that every ministry and organisation in the Diocese has clear, strong leaders so that things continue strongly during the inter-regnum.
- 3) Try to get all parish pledges up to date by the end of this year. This was a special gift that the Diocese gave to me when I arrived as Bishop – all parishes were up to date. Please do everything in your power to do that again!

2.2 Preparing to Elect a New Bishop

Of course it would not be right for me to interfere in the process of who you elect as the next Bishop! But I believe that it is my responsibility to help you prepare well. Some elections of Bishops feel more like power-politics than trying to discern God's will. So I intend to help you to address these questions during the year:

1) What is the ministry of a Diocesan Bishop?

In other words what kind of Bishop does the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist need? What are your expectations? What qualities are we looking for and what gifts are needed? Remember that a Bishop is a Bishop of the whole church and not only of the Diocese.

2) What is the process of electing a Bishop?

The Canons of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa have a clear and strict process that has to be followed – which starts when the Archbishop sets a date for the Elective Assembly. Much of the responsibility for overseeing this process lies with the Electoral Advisory Committee which we will elect at Diocesan Synod in August this year.

3) What are we doing when we elect a Bishop?

It is important to understand the difference between a political election and **discerning** whom God is calling. A Political election is about winning and losing; a process of discernment is about listening to God so that God's will is done. The process of electing a Bishop must be soaked in prayer.

4) How should we behave during the process?

Those who are nominated (from inside or outside the Diocese) are not enemies or even rivals! They are simply making themselves available to God and the church – it is a very vulnerable place to be and takes a lot of faith and courage! So there should be no "election promises" or intimidation.

I really pray that the whole process will be a Spirit-filled, Godly one in which the Diocese discerns whom God is calling to lead you into the future. If we answer these questions well and follow the process wisely, then God will bless the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist going forward! And remember Jesus' words, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1).

It is all about taking forward the vision of the Diocese (or adapting it to new needs):

To make disciples in vibrant, self-sufficient Congregations established and linked to each other by sharing in:

- ✦ Resources
- ✦ Ministry and service
- ✦ Outreach and evangelism.

Have a blessed 2018 and a holy Lent. May you and your people draw close to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessings,

†Martin

†Martin: St Mark the Evangelist

