

# The Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist

(The Anglican Church in Limpopo Province)

Bishop: Martin Breytenbach

E-mail: [martin@stmark.org.za](mailto:martin@stmark.org.za) Web Site: [www.stmark.org.za](http://www.stmark.org.za)



P.O Box 643  
Polokwane, 0700

26 November 2014

Ad Clerum: Advent 2014

To All Clergy  
Copies to all Churchwardens  
Copies to Diocesan Organisations

**Please share this with God's people in your parish or organisation!**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ, who promised to build his church and to be with us always until the end of time.

## Evaluating Multiplication

At our Synod in 2006 we adopted a resolution about the multiplication of parishes:

This Synod commits the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist to multiply our present 12 parishes into more self-sufficient parishes. In order to do this Synod respectfully requests

- ✦ The Bishop to call a Diocesan Missionary Conference by the end of 2007;
- ✦ Each parish to set targets and work towards achieving them by the end of 2010.

In the last month I have had a couple of opportunities to share with groups of people the vision of the Diocese, and the process of multiplying parishes that got going after our Missionary Conference in 2007. I have also been wrestling with filling vacancies for Rectors in various places – things are never straightforward when you are working with people and their families! And we have all been working on our Diocesan and Parish Budgets for 2015.

All this has got me thinking: how are we doing compared to the goals we set for parish multiplication at our Diocesan Missionary Conference in 2007 and at Synods and Diocesan Standing Committee meetings since then? And what are the areas that need special attention going forward?

### 1 In The Beginning...

*"In the beginning God created..." (Genesis 1:1)*

*"In the beginning was the Word..." (John 1:1)*

Everything worthwhile and lasting starts with God – and so it was with parish multiplication in the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist. After waiting upon God and listening to God we heard him say, "Now is the time to start multiplying parishes".

Over the years we have learned a lot about how to do this: starting with clusters of chapelries within a parish. They slowly become more independent until they are ready to stand as parishes in their own right. This involves raising up their own leaders, developing their own financial systems, sending their pledges directly to the Diocese, and much

more. Chapter 6 of our "Guidelines for Leaders" explains the process in more detail, and is available from Solomon Makololo and the Leadership Team.

### 2 Goals and Progress

*This one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)*

At various stages we have also set goals for ourselves, stretching up to 2017.

If you include our United Churches and Mission Parishes, in 2006 we had:

- ✦ 14 Parishes
- ✦ 9 Rectors (Church Supported)
- ✦ 4 Priests in Charge (Self Supporting)
- ✦ Organised into 4 Archdeacons.

Our goal for 2017 was to have:

- ✦ 32 Parishes
- ✦ 27 with Rectors
- ✦ 5 with Priests in Charge
- ✦ Organised into 6 Archdeacons.

Looking at where we are now, in 2015 we will have:

- ✦ 27 Parishes (of which 2 are United Churches and 7 are Mission Parishes or "Fresh Expressions")
- ✦ Only 11 with Stipendiary Rectors
- ✦ The remaining 16 with Self-Supporting Priests in Charge
- ✦ Organised into 7 Archdeacons.

You can see from this that we are on track with multiplying our existing parishes, and have found that we need one more Archdeaconry than we thought we would.

But there are two areas where we are falling behind:

- 1) In addition to multiplying our existing parishes, there are many places where there is a crying need for new churches to be planted: such as RDP housing settlements, some of our rural villages, and on the fringes of our growing towns and cities like Polokwane and Seshego.
- 2) We need to train more Stipendiary Clergy and increase our giving so that we can support far more Rectors.

### 3 What a Parish Needs

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12)*  
*Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:27)*

Let me focus for a moment on why we need full-time, Stipendiary (ie Church Supported) Rectors. In order to implement our Diocesan Vision and be effective in mission and ministry, we have agreed that **every parish should aim at these six things**. If any one of them is missing, the parish falls short of its potential and calling:

- 1) **Every member** growing as a disciple of Christ, and using his or her gifts in God's service – as part of the body of Christ.
- 2) Many **lay leaders** sharing in the ministry and mission of the church (e.g. church councillors, lay ministers, leaders of organisations).
- 3) A stipendiary **youth pastor**, who could be an intern who is discerning a possible call to the ordained ministry.
- 4) Doing some kind of **community development** wherever we have church land or buildings.
- 5) A team of **self-supporting clergy** to lead the sacramental, teaching and pastoral ministry.
- 6) A **stipendiary rector** to be team leader who equips others for ministry and oversees the life, mission and ministry of the church.

The role of the rector is critical because, I have discovered, **everything depends on having effective leadership**. That is why we invest so much time, effort and money in selecting and training our stipendiary priests. A parish can survive indefinitely without a Rector (and we have many wonderful Priests in Charge who serve sacrificially and with great love) but it will never become the disciple-making, missional community that God wants it to be.

So, it is clear to me that, in the next few years **we need to put a lot of energy into:**

- ✦ Training enough people to fill the 32 or more posts for Rectors that will be available;
- ✦ Raising our giving so that every parish is ready and able to support a stipendiary Rector.

Is that too much to ask or too difficult? **I do not believe it is!** Two of our "smallest" parishes (in terms of numbers) are already supporting stipendiary Rectors – St Luke and the Zoutpansberg. If they can do it, then so can the rest of our parishes, including the new ones that will be created through multiplication in the next few years!

### 4 Way Forward

So, how do we get there?

When I was praying about coming to the Diocese as Bishop, God led me to Acts 11:23-24:

*When he (Barnabas) came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; for he*

*was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord.*

Barnabas had learned **the most important principle of Christian leadership: look to see what God is doing and then join in!** Barnabas saw what God was doing in Antioch and encouraged the people to run with it – as a result the church grew and God did even more amazing things.

The same thing is happening right here, in the Diocese of St Mark the Evangelist! Just at a time when I am seeing the need for more Rectors for our growing number of parishes:

- ✦ Many ordinands and potential ordination candidates are offering themselves to the church for training.
- ✦ In the last few months, several potential Rectors have contacted me to ask if there may be an opportunity for them to serve in this Diocese. Some are not suitable, but there are people who can see what God is doing here and want to be part of it.

One of the things we are starting next year is an Intern programme for young leaders. A few young leaders from the Diocese will be living "in community" in or close to Polokwane.

Philip Moseki is returning from COTT to serve as Deacon at Christ Church Cathedral, and Prince Mphoshi will be going to COTT to study. We are working with others who will hopefully go to college in 2016 and beyond.

### 5 Major Injection of Funds Needed!

All this is happening in a very challenging economic climate. Times are tough. Yet, **God is more than able to meet our needs if we work with him**. Diocesan Finance Board has planned three special strategies for next year and beyond in order to meet this need:

- 1) **Give For Growth Lent Appeal** – It is a few years since we had a Lent Appeal. This year we will distribute envelopes and ask our people to give generously.
- 2) **Diocesan Family Fun Day** – The Diocesan Family Fun Day on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May will include a special "Puno" and collection for the vision of the Diocese. Please plan to be there and to give generously.
- 3) **Tithe your Harvest Collection** – most parishes raise a lot of money at their annual Harvest celebration. We are asking all parishes to consider giving 10% of this towards the Diocesan vision.

Some parishes may even decide to go beyond that – like Mashashane and Christ Church Cathedral in their pledges for 2015. Letaba has also given extra in the past.

Have a blessed Advent Season – come Lord Jesus!

Yours in Christ,

*†Martin St Mark  
the Evangelist*

†Martin