

Sunday 25th November 2012 Cathedral, Grahamstown 7.30 & 9.30 a.m. 16 days of activism against violence against women & children (25th Nov – 10th Dec)		34th Sunday of the Year B Christ the King Sunday before Advent Celebration of the Anglicans ACT Vision Farewell for Revd Andy Kruger	
Jeremiah 23:1-6	Ps 93	Rev 1:4b-8	
		John 18:33-37	
Anglicans ACT			

“Jesus replied, ‘My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did, my followers would be fighting to save me from the clutches of the Jews. My kingdom belongs elsewhere.’ ” (Jn 18:36) - REB

Today is the Sunday of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the church year; also known as “Stir up” Sunday, from the SAPB Collect for today, “Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people...” This is a time to affirm and to be reminded of the lordship of Christ, the sovereignty of God over human affairs, over the turmoil of our world. Today is the Sunday before Advent, the season of hope and expectation, the reminder that God is the God of new beginnings. Today, Anglicans all over Southern Africa are celebrating the Anglicans ACT Vision – our call to be Anchored in the love of Christ, Committed to God’s mission, and Transformed by the Holy Spirit. And today, 25th November, marks the start of the 16 days of activism against violence against women and children.

Thanks, farewells, the Revd Andy Kruger

November is a month of farewells, goodbyes, welcomes, and new beginnings. Grahamstown is emptying rapidly as Rhodes students finish exams and flee for the coast; our boarders from Victoria Girls and Graeme are counting the days to the end of term; we are saying goodbye to leavers; matrics are heading for Plett rage; and today is our Cathedral farewell to the Revd Andy Kruger.

But before we get on to the subject of Andy, we want to join with Anglicans all over the world to say farewell and thank you to Archbishop Rowan Williams, the outgoing Archbishop of Canterbury, as he steps down at the end of this year.

In response to the news that Archbishop Rowan would be retiring from office, Archbishop Thabo wrote,

“We in the Anglican Communion, and indeed the wider world, have been inordinately privileged to have such an able theologian and deeply spiritual thinker, as Archbishop of Canterbury over the last decade. He has exercised remarkable gospel-shaped leadership during tumultuous times for our Communion, in which his commitment to consensus seeking, rooted in his refusal to take quick and easy solutions that fail to address the more fundamental issues, has shown great courage and deeply profound rootedness in the faith to which we are called. Again and again he has returned us to the central questions of whose we are, and for whom we are to be – in loving, faithful, obedient, service of God, of God’s church, and of God’s world.”¹

We thank God for Archbishop Rowan, and we pray for him and his family in the next part of their journey.

Goodbyes to some mean new beginnings for others, and so with the rest of the Anglican Communion we welcome the appointment of Bishop Justin Welby, Bishop of Durham, as the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury. Our prayers are with him as he prepares for this new ministry. We have had another new beginning with the consecration, last week (17th November) of Ellinah Wamukoya as Bishop of Swaziland – the first Anglican woman bishop in Africa. She will be followed, in February next year, by Margaret Vertue, who will be consecrated as Bishop for the diocese of False Bay.

¹ The Archbishop’s News from New Zealand – 9. 5th November 2012.

But now back to Andy.

Andy was seconded to us by the Diocese of Natal, for two years. It was one of those gifts that was completely unexpected and could not have been planned. We had been looking for someone to join the cathedral staff and to lead the student ministry. Out of the blue, we were contacted by the Bishop of Natal and asked if we had any work for this young ordinand who, for personal reasons, had asked to be sent to Grahamstown. Well, stranger things do happen, but not often...

And so Andy arrived. We have seen him grow in confidence, in ministry, in leadership, during his time here. The Cathedral Student Ministry has flourished under his care. We have rejoiced at his engagement to Heather Prince and it has been good to see their shared leadership in the context of the student ministry. We have enjoyed his gifts with liturgy and in particular his preaching. His sermons have been thought-provoking, provocative, and prophetic.

I had suggested that he preach this morning, but thought that there was a danger that he would take revenge on me by choosing to preach to you all from the text favoured by departing assistant clergy, Genesis 22:5, which reads, “Stay here with the donkey while I go yonder...”

He is going yonder, back to Kwa-Zulu Natal, to serve as assistant priest in the Zulu-speaking parish of St Faith’s, Durban. We thank God for Andy, and for Heather. We wish them both well as they make the final preparations for their wedding in January. They have been such a gift to us. We shall miss them.

Kingship, leadership, authority

Our scripture readings give us food for thought about kingship, authority, and leadership, in the context of Christ the King.

In the Old Testament, leadership and authority was understood as bestowed by God. It was God who raised up kings, and cast them down when they disobeyed. It was God who anointed King David and established a covenant with him. David became the example, the model, of the faithful king. The prophets would refer again and again to the king in David's line who would be sent by God to save and restore the kingdom.

“The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.” (Jer 23:5)

The king, the leader to be sent by God would be in stark contrast with the faithless shepherds

“who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture...[who] have driven them away, and ... have not attended to them.” (Jer 23:1-2)

Poor leadership, those who abuse their position, who misuse their authority, who use their power to break down and not to build up – such people receive harsh words of judgement and condemnation from God. In their place, God says,

“I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord.” (Jer 23:4).

How greatly we need all in authority to follow the example of Jesus who is the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep; the example of the Son of Man who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. In his final Presidential Address at the recent meeting the Anglican Consultative Council in

New Zealand, Archbishop Rowan spoke of authority that “enables and empowers... that is life-giving”²

Sometimes there are victories, successes, signs of good leadership. There was news this week that the Supreme Court of Harare has declared that, in fact, the properties and assets of the diocese belong to the diocese, and not to the excommunicated Nolbert Kunonga. Hopefully, the years of suffering and persecution for Anglicans in Zimbabwe are coming to an end.

Also last week, the Minister of Basic Education agreed to implement the Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure next year. The court case against her, brought by *Equal Education*, and other civic groups and individuals, was withdrawn, but it remains a concern that people have to go to court to get the government to do its job.

The kingdom we serve is not of this world, but we must engage with and confront the powers of this world.

To proclaim Christ as King means that our loyalty as Christians is ultimately to God. It means that all authority will one day be accountable to the source of that authority. It means that those who have power are called and charged by God

“to maintain justice and righteousness in the land.” (Jer 23:5)

Vision and hope – Anglicans ACT

But it also means that, like a golden thread, or like a candle in the midst of a power failure, we as Christians, we as the church, are called to live and act as signs of the kingdom of God. “My kingdom does not belong to this world... My kingdom belongs elsewhere”, Jesus said (Jn 18:36) – words sadly used by some Christians as a reason to

² ACNS5234, 5th November 2012

remain uninvolved, detached. But we live in the world, and are called to make a difference, to be the catalyst that creates change, the spark that starts the fire, the reminder that in the midst of a hurting and broken world, God is at work, God loves, God opens closed doors, God brings life where there is death, hope where there is despair.

We are called “to take responsibility for God”, to be a sign of faith and life, to point to the redeeming love of Christ that never lets us go. Archbishop Rowan Williams tells the story of a Jewish woman, Etty Hillesum, who died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz at the age of 29, during World War Two, yet who “became more and more conscious of God’s hand on her life, at a time when most would have been likely to feel more deeply sceptical about God.”³

She wrote,

“there must be someone to live through it all and bear witness to the fact that God lived, even in these times. And why should I not be that witness?”

In a letter to a friend, a few months before her death, she described her life as having become

“an uninterrupted dialogue with You, O God”,

And she could write of sensing her vocation in the concentration camp as being

“not ... simply to proclaim You, God, to commend you to the heart of others. One must also clear the path toward You in them.”

She “saw her belief as a matter of deciding to occupy a certain place in the world, a place where others could connect with God through

³ Rowan Williams 2007, *Tokens of Trust*, Westminster John Knox, 22

her... because she had agreed to take responsibility for God's believability."⁴

Surely part of our vocation, our calling, as Christians here in Grahamstown, here at the Cathedral, is to take responsibility for God's believability? To clear the path towards God in others? To hold before ourselves and others, a vision of God in the midst of extreme suffering and darkness?

That is why we have a vision, a vision of what we believe God is calling us to be and to do, as the Anglican Church in Southern Africa. We believe that we are called to be an ACT church – A, C, T, ACT – Anchored in the love of Christ, Committed to God's Mission, Transformed by the Holy Spirit.

To be anchored in the love of Christ means that everything begins with God and God's love.

To be anchored in the love of Christ means that we are loved by God for who we are. It means that we are called to be people who love, who forgive, who reach out, who reconcile. God's love comes to touch and heal us where we are broken and wounded and scarred. For us as South Africans, that can mean the wounds of our past; the wounds of prejudice and discrimination and racism; the wounds caused when we have been rejected or sidelined. It can mean the wounds of abuse. We, or someone we know and love, may have been the victim of a brutal assault, or a mugging, or being bullied. We can carry that rage and fear with us for years.

To be anchored in the love of Christ means to bring these wounds to God so that we may be healed, and in turn become instruments of healing.

⁴ Williams, 23

To be transformed by the Holy Spirit is the on-going work of healing, as we are enfolded in the love of God. It is to be empowered and equipped, to receive gifts for ministry and witness and service. It means to become the person, the community, that we were created to be. It means to grow and mature in wisdom. It means to leave the past and to move with faith and hope into the future.

To be committed to God's Mission means that we are willing to be used by God to do His will in the world, to be part of the answer to the prayer, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth..." It is ways in which we can make a difference. When Anglicans act, things happen. When Anglicans act, communities are transformed. When Anglicans act, there is hope.

As Anglicans, together with others, act, we shall see the following:

Our schools will be places where children and young people, and their teachers, are safe. Our wonderful teachers will be supported and affirmed. Samuel Ntsika Primary School will have running water, and toilets that flush. Good Shepherd will have a Principal, duly appointed by the department. Schools will be adequately staffed. Teaching posts will be occupied by dedicated teachers, and classes will be energetic and creative. There will be a culture of learning. This will happen because Anglicans act.

Our orphans and child-headed house-holds will be supported and looked after by social workers who are dedicated and caring, by families, by the Christian community. Our environment will be protected against harm and unsustainable development. There will be no more poaching of rhinos, no fracking of the Karoo, no pollution being poured into the rivers. This will happen because Anglicans act.

Our local and provincial authorities, and our national government, will be free of corruption. There will be service delivery. There will be an end to the bucket system. Houses will be well built and would not

crack or fall down when it rains. Roads will be maintained. This will happen because Anglicans act.

Workers and employers will sit down together and negotiate fair wage levels. There will be adequate pay and good living conditions for all. There will be care and support for those who are unemployed. Events like those in Marikana and De Doorns will be a distant memory. This will happen because Anglicans act.

We will choose to spend less, rather than more, on funerals, on tombstones, on matric dances.

Our young people will be well cared for, with youth development and leadership training. With the support and help of wise adults, we will help young people through the storms of sexuality, gender violence, and substance abuse. We will have special support for those who are unemployed.

There will be no need for the 16 days of activism against violence against women and children, because there will be no violence. Boys and girls will respect one another. Young women and girls will be safe from harm. This will happen because Anglicans act.

There will not be abuse of power. Nor will people be compelled by law to show respect to our President, as suggested by Blade Nzimande, because in a land where God's kingdom has come, those who hold high office in our land will not undermine the dignity and stature of their office. This will happen because Anglicans act.

CONCLUSION

This is not a pipe dream. This is our vision, our dream, as Anglicans. When Anglicans act, things happen. When Anglicans act, communities are transformed. When Anglicans act, there is hope.

Let's hold this vision up in prayer. Let's offer ourselves to God so that we may be those who take responsibility for God, who clear the path for God to work in the lives of others, who are signs of the presence of Christ.

As we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, we know that this is God's world, and that Christ is Lord.

May the Lord bless and strengthen us in our life and our journey as God's beloved children, in all that lies ahead.