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**DIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG**



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**PASTORAL LETTER**

**Vol 1**

**February 2018**

**Dear Saints**

It is a privilege to greet you in this letter with thankfulness and praise to God for the outstanding results achieved by all our schools in their matric examinations at the end of 2017. The media was full of glowing reports of how well our schools had done, and I'm sure that all Anglicans in the Diocese were as thrilled as was I. We must thus, as a Diocese, thank all the teachers and other staff in our private and public schools whose hard work led to the success of the matriculants. We must also pay tribute to the learners themselves who now face a world beyond the comfort of school classrooms to discover new challenges as they enter tertiary education, embark upon gap years, or enter the job market. We pray God's blessing on all these people, while, at the same time, holding all our schools in our prayers at the beginning of the new academic year.

At the heart of the educational opportunities we provide as an Anglican Church is the need to instill the value of responsible citizenship in our young people, and in all parishioners. It is disturbing, therefore, to be writing this in a week in which we have read reports of sexual misconduct in state schools. We need to recognise that we live in a society where such incidents impact on some of the children who are in our pastoral care in our parishes. In the knowledge that they are part of a church in which the priesthood of all believers is a key tenet, all Anglicans need to take a strong stand against such abhorrent behaviours. They need to get involved in their local schools and bring their own priestly witness to bear to ensure that a moral compass is followed by teachers, parents, other staff, and children. Responsible citizenship begins with the Church, and in this Year of the Youth, the growth of our young people's ministry needs to include lively teaching on the need for good morals and ethical behaviour. This is not restricted to those who interact directly with such young people, but includes everyone.

In my sermon at the recent ordination service in the Cathedral, I spoke of the privilege of God having given our Diocese 35 000 saints who, through their baptism, have a role in the ministry of the Priesthood of all Believers. I am sometimes unsure that everyone in our Parishes believe this, or that our Priests promote this! However, it is important to embrace this concept. Alan Jones, in his book, "Sacrifice and delight", notes that priesthood has to do with recognising the world as a sacred place and treating it accordingly: "Priesthood is the art of living gratefully and gracefully in a cycle of sacrifice and delight."

During this year, we will be choosing 16 young people to be trained in youth ministry. This is a wonderful start to meeting the vision to strengthen the Priesthood of all Believers at one of the foundational aspects of our ministry. This is a way in which the Diocese is providing Archdeaconries and Parishes with practical means of support for the call

I have made to put youth at the centre of our ministry and of part of my vision of intentional discipleship. If you are in any way able to support such an initiative, please be directly in touch with me. Bear in mind that the vision seeks to bring young people from all corners of the Diocese – from Parishes where resources are plentiful to those in which resources are meagre.

In this and other respects our new Archdeaconries will play an important part as our Diocese seeks to ensure that the vision God has given takes off like a strong and powerful jet plane. The new Archdeaconries have intentionally broken the old traditional spatial structures by, as far as possible, straddling both racial and economic divides. So, for example, in one of them, middle and upper economic echelons are combined with a predominantly lower economic and migrant area of our city. For these structures to work, however, Archdeacons and Parishes need to embrace them with enthusiasm and ensure that their impact flows down to Parish level and to communities in which they are situated – communities in which we face massive socio-economic challenges, as I indicated at the beginning of this letter. For as Priests (lay and clergy), we need to be ministering to the community *beyond* the Parish. I will be meeting regularly with the Archdeacons to realise this vision, and the Archdeacons in turn will be meeting with their lay leaders and Clergy to drive this vision.

Undergirding all of this is that we know that our society is rotten with corruption. Lies and half truths abound in the public discourse. The Church needs to be a moral compass in an age in which society, as South Africa indeed is now, is left in a state of limbo not knowing, for example, where the real centre of political power lies. The Church needs to read that compass on behalf of society to let it know when it, and more specifically its leaders, veer off course. Our Church, through our structures such as Archdeaconries, are ideally placed to do this. Through

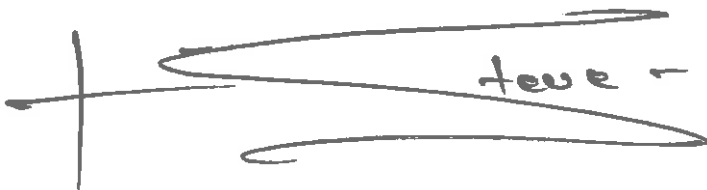
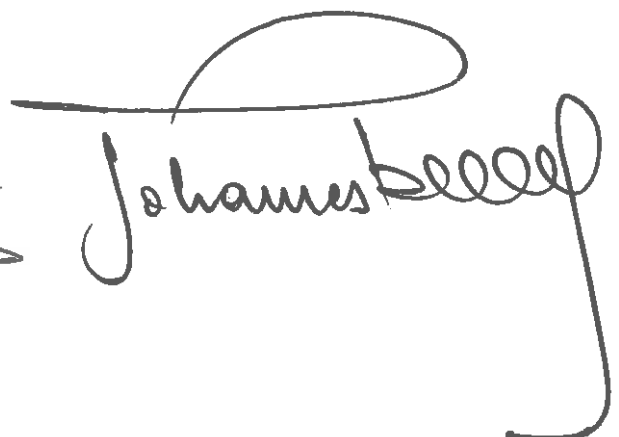
their contact with the poor, our Churches are similarly so placed, for it is time for the poor to make their voice heard. The Church is one of the ways in which this can occur.

In 1 Samuel 15: 16-23, we read of Saul who took his eyes away from God as his leader and took decisions on his own without consultation. His decisions were therefore weak - he was either afraid to take a stand, or simply greedy. That sounds very familiar in our present society. Disobedience to God's call is a serious issue. The prayer for responsible citizenship therefore, to be found in our own Prayer Book on page 86, is one we should pray daily as we move forward at this juncture in our witness as Anglicans in the hub of South African socio-economic and political society:

“Lord Jesus Christ  
the length, breadth, depth, and height of your love  
is beyond our understanding:  
grant that this love may so transform us  
through your suffering  
as to make us reach out to the despairing  
and the desperate  
and work for justice, reconciliation, and peace  
among all people;  
for your Name's sake.”

Shalom

Yours full of grace

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal line and a vertical line on the left.A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johannes Beegel". The signature is highly stylized with a large loop at the top and a long vertical line at the bottom.

**The Rt Revd Dr. Steve Moreo**