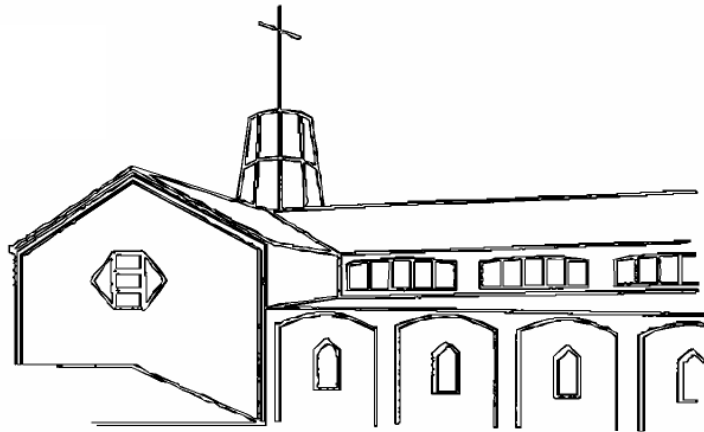


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Parish of St John the Baptist
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PINETOWN 3610

Parish of St John the Baptist
Patronal Edition 2008



The
LANTERN

Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.
Is 40:3

Dear people of God

*"But we have this **treasure in clay jars** so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us."*
(2 Cor 4:7)

What we have at St John's is to be treasured. At this time of our Patronal Festival we need to celebrate our heritage. It is faith, the Spirit working in us that is valuable, more than the clay jar itself, which may represent the way in which we express our faith.

I've said it before: We are a very diverse parish - increasingly diverse in race, theological convictions and worship preferences to name just a few. I believe firmly that this very diversity itself enhances our treasure, for we hear God's spirit speaking to us through one another. It is in not actively listening to one another that we miss out on something of the richness that God has placed in each of us.

We welcome back Revd Caroline Beech and Penny McLennan and will soon welcome back Rhea Gwynn. They have experienced, in a meaningful way, a tradition of Christianity which has been largely lost, being overtaken by the church which spread out from Rome in the early centuries of Christianity. Let us listen to what they have to say to us. Are there treasures that we can retrieve from our Christian heritage which could enrich us here at St John's?

Xenophobia

Xenophobia is defined as the fear of strangers. The recent outbreak of violence against immigrants has been a sad smudge on our journey towards reconciliation and reconstruction, revealing the fragile state of the relationships we have with one another. On the other hand, the hospitality, care and compassion offered towards those who have become refugees, has been heartening. Thank you to those of our own parish who provided generous assistance of various kinds. I am grateful to Revd Sue Britton who has been closely involved with these events, liaising with Diakonia Council of Churches and the Diocesan Office and helping us as well as other churches in Pinetown, to respond quickly and appropriately to the crisis.

When reflecting on how we can sometimes treat strangers I could not help thinking about how at times we can be xenophobic in our own faith – fearing that which we do not know, and do not yet fully understand. The treasure we have is a shared treasure. We discover it more fully when we respect those who are different from us and learn from them.

Stewardship Focus

This year we will be having a major focus on stewardship – stewardship in its broad sense which includes our time and talents as well as our money. The purpose of this will be to include each member of St John's to become involved in the building of God's kingdom here in Pinetown and beyond.

Our campaign will culminate in Dedication Sunday on 12 October. Headed up by Matthews Buthelezi, and supported by the clergy and council, there will be a focused campaign leading up to this day of dedication and we look forward to your participation in this.

Material will be sent out to members with opportunities listed of areas of possible involvements and dedicated (financial) giving forms. There will also be lists of these various ministries and activities put up at church for which people can sign up. I would encourage you to prayerfully consider how you can give of yourself in service to God and to others, and of your finances, in the year ahead. Let's become a growing church with members who are committed, included, valued and actively involved. Let us recognize our treasure and use it to enrich others.

Updating parish roll

We will also be using the opportunity during this time to update our parish roll. Individual members or family units will be sent details of their records and asked to confirm or update them. We would appreciate your co-operation.

Youth Group

On Friday night from 18h30-20h30 a youth group for mainly high school going young people meets in our small hall. The last meeting of this term will be on 27 June. Meetings will resume on Friday 18 July after the school term begins.

We are planning to get together a team of people who can share the responsibility of leading the youth on Friday evenings. If there are parents of young people or others in the parish who would like to become part of this team, please speak to me.

Indigenous plants

Max Gibbons, working with our verger, Sam Shezi, has almost finished the waterwise garden next to the small hall. He expressed to me recently his gratitude for the indigenous plants that parishioners had spontaneously donated for the project. He will continue renewing other areas of the garden by planting indigenous plants. Donations of indigenous plants are therefore still welcomed. Please pass them on to Max.

Eco-congregations workshop

This workshop, hosted by the Pinetown Archdeaconry Environment Committee and held at St Agnes' on 23-24 May, went off well. A full report has been compiled by Janet Williams. We will have a copy of it in the parish office as well as on the notice board for those who wish to read it.

The ten participating parishes committed themselves to explore further what it means to be the church today in a context of increasingly environmental degradation and rapid climate change.

Let us treasure one another who are part of God's gift of creation.

With love
Andrew Warmback - Rector

'AD LAOS' – 'TO THE PEOPLE'**ARCHBISHOP of CAPETOWN +THABO - Pentecost, May 2008**

My dear People of God

It is a little over a month since the Service of Installation and Rededication, and my arrival at Bishops court.

My hope and intention is that this will be the first of many letters 'ad laos' (which means 'to the people') that I shall write to you, the people of God, Christ's flock. My desire is that there should be open channels of communication between Cape Town and the Dioceses, Parishes and People of this Province as we share together in the ministry to which we are all called, for it is the responsibility of each of us to 'encourage one another and build each other up', as St Paul writes to the Thessalonians (1 Th 5:11).

In the past two weeks, alongside Ascension Day, many of us also marked Freedom Day, Workers' Day and Human Rights Day. I was struck by how each of these secular holidays finds a far deeper and fuller meaning in the One who came to bring us 'life in abundance' and who is now ascended to the right hand of God where he intercedes for us (Rom8:34). Jesus is the one who came 'to let the oppressed go free' (Lk4:18); who says 'we must work the works of him who sent me ...' (Jn9:4); and who shows us what it is to be fully human, 'sharing in our humanity' and 'becoming like us in every respect' (Heb2:14,16). Surely Jesus is praying for us to grow in abundant life in all these areas.

This is the message of Pentecost also – for 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (2Cor3:17); and we are 'equipped for every good work' (2Tim3:16,17); and we can experience our 'rights' as God's children (Ga 4:5,6 – NIV). The Spirit's delight and desire is that all these should bear fruit in us and through us.

I write about all these things, because it is as we live out these promises of God, that we are enabled to be salt and light. The world needs to learn deeper truths of what freedom, work, and our right – our calling – to full humanity are all about. Though the church must speak publicly on these issues – as we do about other great themes such as forgiveness and reconciliation and restoration – we must also live them out at the human level, within Dioceses, parishes, congregations, communities, families, and homes, and between individuals. Jesus became Emmanuel, God with us, and the Spirit dwells within us, so that the great truths and promises of God should become living realities for each and every one of us, and for the people around us, in very personal ways.

This is a great challenge for how the church lives. We can all speak together of the promises of freedom – but freedom may mean many different things in the very different circumstances of our geographically vast and hugely diverse Province.

This is why communication is so important – that we really do learn how to 'encourage and build one another up' as we explore and share the different ways in which we are called to be salt and light, bringers of freedom and full humanity, in this new chapter in the life of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

Dear people of God, as we seek afresh to discover what it is to be the body of Christ in our time, and who God is in Jesus Christ, for us here and now, be partners with me in this seeking and discovering – and pray for me and my part in this, as I pray always for you. Pray for the people of Myanmar and act.

Let me end with a few words about Zimbabwe. Following my statement

two weeks ago, in which I called for an arms embargo, I was invited to a private meeting with President Mbeki on 27 April. In over two hours, he gave me an extensive briefing about his long and arduous task as mediator, and the lengthy road that had to be travelled even to enable the first round of elections to go ahead in relative freedom and peace. Though we may not always agree with his handling of the situation, he certainly deserves the prayers of the Church in support not only of all that will bring a just and fair conclusion to the electoral process, and, even more important, of all that will allow the people of Zimbabwe to move into an era of greater freedom and flourishing.

The people of Zimbabwe have been so battered and bruised, and now suffer terrible uncertainties. Please keep them in your prayers, and, where you can, show the love of Christ to these neighbours of ours, so many of whom have been forced to leave their country. We know that there are unlikely to be swift and easy answers, but as a Church we shall continue to affirm and encourage all that can lead to a lasting, just, and peaceful solution. We hold Zimbabwe's leaders responsible for ensuring the security and well-being of all their citizens, just as we expect the leaders of SADC and the African Union to play their part in upholding democracy and good governance. And most of all, we pray for the God of love to bring an end to the poverty, hunger, suffering and conflict within Zimbabwe. As I said in my Charge, at my Installation, I am committed to working and praying for 'an Africa without conflict' where everyone is able to hear Christ's words 'Peace be with you.' I ask you to join me in this prayer.

Yours in the service of Christ
+Thabo

STATEMENT BY THE MOST Revd THABO MAKGOBA

Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town: 15th May, 2008

Much of the appalling violence being inflicted by our people on foreigners in Alexandra and elsewhere is rooted in deep frustration arising from our failure to distribute the gains of economic growth in South Africa to all. But it is unacceptable for those who suffer poverty and deprivation to express their anger by attacking others who are also suffering from poverty and deprivation. Sadly, foreign people are labeled, abused and killed, but those from other countries who live among us are just as much our neighbours, whom we are commanded by Jesus to love as ourselves, as are South Africans. Foreign nationals are God's people too.

OPEN LETTER TO BISHOPS OF THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Anglican Communion News Service

The Archbishop of Canterbury, has sent an open letter to the bishops of the Anglican Communion, in advance of the Lambeth Conference.

The Feast of Pentecost is a time when we give thanks that God, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, makes us able to speak to each other and to the whole world of the wonderful things done in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a good moment to look forward prayerfully to the Lambeth Conference, asking God to pour out the Spirit on all of us as we make ready for this time together, so that we shall indeed be given grace to speak boldly in his Name.

I indicated in earlier letters that the shape of the Conference will be different from what many have been used to. We have listened carefully to those who have expressed their difficulties with Western and parliamentary styles of meeting, and the Design Group has tried to find a new style - a style more reflective of that Pentecost moment when all received the gift of speaking freely about Christ.

At the heart of this will be the indaba groups. Indaba is a Zulu word describing a meeting for purposeful discussion among equals. Its aim is not to negotiate a formula that will keep everyone happy but to go to the heart of an issue and find what the true challenges are before seeking God's way forward. It is a method with parallels in many cultures, and it is close to what Benedictine monks and Quaker Meetings seek to achieve as they listen quietly together to God, in a community where all are committed to a fellowship of love and attention to each other and to the word of God.

Each day's work in this context will go forward with careful facilitation and preparation, to ensure that all voices are heard (and many languages also!). The hope is that over the two weeks we spend together, these groups will build a level of trust that will help us break down the walls we have so often built against each other in the Communion. And in combination with the intensive prayer and fellowship of the smaller Bible study groups, all this will result, by God's grace, in clearer vision and discernment of what needs to be done.

As I noted when I wrote to you in Advent, this makes it all the more essential that those who come to Lambeth will arrive genuinely willing to engage fully in that growth to-

wards closer unity that the Windsor Report and the Covenant Process envisage. We hope that people will not come so wedded to their own agenda and their local priorities that they cannot listen to those from other cultural backgrounds. As you may have gathered, in circumstances where there has been divisive or controversial action, I have been discussing privately with some bishops the need to be wholeheartedly part of a shared vision and process in our time together.

Of course, as baptised Christians and pastors of Christ's flock, we are not just seeking some low-level consensus, or a simple agreement to disagree politely. We are asking for the fire of the Spirit to come upon us and deepen our sense that we are answerable to and for each other and answerable to God for the faithful proclamation of his grace uniquely offered in Jesus. That deepening may be painful in all kinds of ways. The Spirit does not show us a way to by-pass the Cross. But only in this way shall we truly appear in the world as Christ's Body as a sign of God's Kingdom which challenges a world scarred by poverty, violence and injustice.

The potential of our Conference is great. The focus of all we do is meant to be strengthening our Communion and equipping all bishops to engage more effectively in mission; only God the Holy Spirit can bind us together in lasting and Christ-centred way, and only God the Holy Spirit can give us the words we need to make Christ truly known in our world. So we must go on praying hard with our people that the Spirit will bring these possibilities to fruition as only he can. Those who have planned the Conference have felt truly touched by that Spirit as they have worked together, and I know that their only wish is that what they have outlined for us will enable others to experience the same renewal and delight in our fellowship.

This is an ambitious event - ambitious for God and God's Kingdom, which is wholly appropriate for a Lambeth Conference. And our ambition is nothing less than renewal and revival for us all in the Name of Jesus and the power of his Spirit.

May that Spirit be with you daily in your preparation for our meeting. As Our Lord says, 'You know him, for he lives with and will be in you' (Jn 14.17).

+ Rowan Cantuar

ANAGRAMS FROM THE INTERNET

Contributed by Beryl Rawson

DORMITORY: DIRTY ROOM
PRESBYTERIAN: BEST IN PRAYER
ASTRONOMER: MOON STARER
DESPERATION: A ROPE ENDS IT
THE EYES: THEY SEE
GEORGE BUSH: HE BUGS GORE
THE MORSE CODE: HERE COME THE DOTS

SLOT MACHINES: CASH LOST IN ME
ANIMOSITY: IS NO AMITY
ELECTION RESULTS: LIES - LETS RECOUNT
SNOOZE ALARMS: ALAS NO MORE Z'S
A DECIMAL POINT: IM A DOT IN PLACE
THE EARTHQUAKES: THAT QUEER SHAKE
ELEVEN PLUS TWO: TWELVE PLUS ONE

BACKGROUND ON GAFCON

A SUMMARIZED STATEMENT FROM THE BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH IN UGANDA and EXCERPTS FROM THE GAFCON WEBSITE [www.gafcon.org]

Written in the cross are the words:-

Veritas *truth* - the vertical relation between God and humanity which is Christ.
Uniti *united* - the horizontal relationship between all believers found in the body of Christ.



What is GAFCON?

The Lambeth Conference of Bishops is held every ten years; this year taking place in Kent, England in July. The Archbishop of Canterbury convenes the Lambeth Conference and invites Bishops and their spouses from all provinces of the Anglican Communion. The purpose of Lambeth is to provide Bishops with an opportunity for worship, study, and conversation about matters that affect the Anglican Communion.

GAFCON [the Global Anglican Future Conference] is being held in Jerusalem from 22-29 June 2008. It is conceived by the Anglican Archbishops of Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, the Southern Cone (South America), and Sydney (Australia). Evangelical Anglican

The Bishops from the Church of Uganda and Lambeth

Bishops of the Church of Uganda decided together not to go to Lambeth 2008. Lambeth is intended for fellowship among Bishops and the fellowship that the Church of Uganda has with the American Episcopalian church has been broken.

Three reasons are cited by the Ugandan Bishops:

1. In direct violation of the Bible and historic Christian teaching, the American Church consecrated as a Bishop, a gay man living in a same-sex relationship.
2. After five years of pleading, listening to them, and giving them many opportunities, the American Church has not repented of that decision.
3. The Archbishop of Canterbury did not follow the advice given to him by his own appointed Commission to

Some comments by the Ugandan Bishops

A split in the Anglican Communion?

The Anglican Communion has been deeply wounded. The 2003 decision of the Episcopal Church in America to consecrate as a bishop a gay man living in a same-sex relationship has caused a deep tear in the fabric of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Not only has the American Church not repented of this decision and ac-

tion, but it has continued to advance non-Biblical teaching and practice. Their Bishops and many clergy have presided at the blessing of same-sex unions. Their Archbishop does not believe the Bible when Jesus says, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.*" Another American Bishop has said,

"The Church wrote the Bible, so the church can re-write the Bible." The Ugandan bishops say: "It is wrong for them to continue to be Bishops and leaders in the Church. Yet, if their church will not discipline them, we will continue in broken fellowship with them. We cannot tolerate such theological corruption."

A crisis about homosexuality?

This crisis is about authority. Homosexuality is only the presenting issue. All four Instruments of Unity in the Anglican Communion - The Archbishop of Canterbury, The Lambeth Conference of Bishops, The Primates Meeting and the Anglican

Consultative Council - advised against the American Church approving homosexual relationships. Yet, the American Church openly defied these resolutions and there was no disciplinary action taken against them. That is a crisis of authority in

the Communion. Furthermore, the apparent lack of resolve to take action manifests a deeper crisis, namely a crisis of confidence in the authority of the Word of God as the ultimate standard of faith and moral living.

Bishops from the UK and the USA are also involved in its organization. More than 1,000 people have registered for GAFCON – these include bishops, clergy and laity.

There are three main aims of the GAFCON conference:

1. To provide an opportunity for fellowship as well as to continue to experience and proclaim the transforming love of Jesus Christ
2. To develop a renewed understanding of identity as Anglican Christians.
3. To prepare for an Anglican future in which the Gospel is uncompromised and Christ-centred mission is a top priority.

GAFCON and Lambeth

GAFCON is different to Lambeth - it includes clergy and non-ordained leaders from the church. GAFCON is the first of its kind and is a one-time event. It is not an alternative to Lambeth.

not invite to Lambeth those responsible for the confusion and disobedience in the Anglican Communion. Scripture says, "*Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?*" The Ugandan Bishops are withdrawing from the Lambeth Conference as they strongly believe that the American stance and Canterbury's response is most grievous.

Can anything good come out of this crisis?

As Christians we are always people of hope. We believe that the Anglican Communion must base its identity on bonds of truth as well as bonds of affection. That's why we are going to GAFCON. We hope that GAFCON will reassert as normative Anglican Christianity the reality we know in

Uganda - that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ can bring substantive change for good in a person's life, in his family, and in our country. We saw it when Christianity came to Uganda. We saw it when the East African Revival broke out in the 1930's and 1940's. We saw families

healed, cycles of revenge broken, and oppression from demonic powers lifted. The only hope from the human condition is eternal forgiveness that comes only through Jesus Christ. That's what the Anglican Church is about, and that's why we're going to GAFCON and not Lambeth.

From the GAFCON website:

GAFCON is a **call to vision and action** for mission based firmly on the "faith once delivered to the saints" and revealed in Scripture, to reform the church and transform persons, communities and societies through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. African Bishops had this focus at their Lagos 2004 conference. The Episcopal Church's agenda has recently overshadowed it. There is a need to develop this gospel agenda for all like-minded believers within the communion.

GAFCON will **outline the mission imperatives** for the next 25 years and how to begin to respond to them.

GAFCON is about **churches being grouped** by what they have in common. GAFCON is about growth and the passion for truth, it is enthusiastic about mission and its focus is the future.

ZIMBABWE IS FACING A CIVIL WAR

Fr Chris Townsend, Information Officer; Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference
6th June 2008

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (CNS):

Zimbabweans in rural areas "fear for their lives", a Church official said after a report warned that Zimbabwe is headed toward civil war.

Post-election attacks have been "most severe" in rural areas, and many Zimbabweans in these areas may be too afraid to vote for the opposition in the run-off presidential election on June 27, head of Zimbabwe's Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Alouis Chaumba said. However, many people in the country's towns and cities "are motivated to vote again to ensure an end to the present system", he told Catholic News Service in a May 26 telephone interview from the capital, Harare.

"Many communities feel that voting will be an act of solidarity with their friends who have been killed or wounded in the violence, so that they did not die in vain," Mr Chaumba said.

A report on post-election violence in Zimbabwe by the Solidarity Peace Trust, an ecumenical group of Church organisations from Zimbabwe and South Africa, said, "There needs to be a general recognition that Zimbabwe is sinking fast into the conditions of a civil war, propelled largely by the increasing reliance on violence by the ruling

party to stay in power, and the rapidly shrinking spaces for any form of peaceful political intervention."

The report, released in Johannesburg, South Africa, on May 21, contained about 50 eyewitness accounts of orchestrated beatings, torture and the destruction of homes and shops.

The results of the March 29 parliamentary and presidential elections are "a clear message that, despite the extremely harsh and

repressive political environment in which elections have been conducted in Zimbabwe, the people of the country found the 'resources of hope' required to say no to continued authoritarian rule," it said.

In their late May newsletter, Zimbabwe's Jesuits said there had been "vicious, premeditated violence" on an unprecedented scale in the country since the elections.

They urged opposition supporters who have been attacked by government agents to resist the temptation to retaliate, saying this would be "civil war".



A PASTORAL LETTER THE ANGLICAN BISHOP OF HARARE, ZIMBABWE

ANGLICAN-INFORMATION have been asked to circulate this pastoral letter from the Rt Rev'd Sebastian Bakare to his people and diocese as they are now experiencing severe intimidation and harassment in all of their parish churches forcing many of them to worship elsewhere. This Mugabe regime backed thugery has been at the behest of Mugabe mouthpiece, self-styled 'Archbishop' Nolbert Kunonga who has recently been excommunicated from the Anglican Province of Central Africa. As a result, Anglicans in particular have been singled out for special attention.

Presidential run-off elections are due to take place in Zimbabwe on 27th June and the level of state-sponsored intimidation and violence is increasing everywhere as Robert Mugabe and the elite surrounding him seek to cling on to power against the will of the people.

Bishop Bakare's courageous stand and support for his people is exemplary, he has our prayers and our fullest support. We only wish that elsewhere in the Central African Province the same could be said of some of the other bishops and their dealings with the faithful – in these dreadful times they are always in danger of appearing to have double standards.

From: the Rt Rev'd Sebastian Bakare – Pastoral letter 21st May 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,
We are shocked and dismayed by the continuous police interference with Sunday services and by the increased brutality causing casualties. Many of you have been assaulted and beaten, and several parishioners of St Monica's Church, Chitungwiza, were brutally assaulted on 18 May and had to be admitted to hospital.

Our struggle to worship without harassment continues. The Supreme Court Order issued by the Hon. Chief Justice on 12th May was totally disregarded by the police, as previous orders have been. Needless to say where there is law and order such defiance would result in the arrest of those in contempt of court. Today in Zimbabwe the rule of law does not exist. That leaves us with no recourse to ensure that our members can freely and peacefully exercise their constitutional right for example, for everyone to worship without harassment. We are however not deterred by this lawlessness and will continue to seek justice through the courts.

Once again we appeal to the law enforcement agents, and especially the police, to let sanity prevail and refrain from harassing and brutalising Anglican Christians in Harare Diocese even if it may fall on deaf ears. Let it be said for the record.

As a Diocese we will look for alternative worship places to ensure that members of our congregations remain united as we struggle for freedom of worship. We will never cease to worship. We also believe, whether the police like it or not, that God will intervene, may be not today or tomorrow but in His own time. We will rejoice when this happens.

As Christians we encourage you all to take solace in reading the Bible and be guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are reminded of Jesus' promise to his disciples:

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But

you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:16-18).

Our lives as Christians will always have security in Christ and not in the powers of this world. May we take this inspiring message into our hearts.

In the book of Revelation chapter 13 we are reminded of the image of the beast whose agenda is to destroy the followers of Christ (Rev 13:5-10). Rest assured that the principalities and powers of this world come and go, but the God who is Alpha and Omega remains to achieve His purpose to save humanity in spite of the challenges put before us by the beast.

We encourage those of you who do not belong to a house group, to join one, as this is a way in which you can support one another in prayer and otherwise.

May God bless you all!

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF CAPE TOWN - 9th June 2008

Anglican Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, who has just returned to Cape Town after a visit to Zimbabwe, said yesterday (Sunday 8th June) that the levels of intimidation in the country underlined "the crucial importance" of deploying large numbers of international election monitors. "There is no doubt that Zimbabwe is a police state," he said in a statement after making a pastoral visit to the country's Anglican bishops.

The full text of his statement follows:

The levels of intimidation I witnessed on a visit to Zimbabwe last week underline the crucial importance of deploying large numbers of both international and local election monitors, from civil society as well as from governmental organisations, for the June 27 presidential run-off.

On a four-hour trip from Harare to Masvingo, we passed nine police roadblocks and were stopped at every one. Most visible were uniformed police armed with rifles, and

groups of men, women and young people chanting in the streets, "Mugabe, what should we do with the sell-outs, tell us," and two trucks transporting such groups to instil fear in others. There is no doubt that Zimbabwe is a police state.

Along the road to Masvingo, once-prosperous farms were derelict. Long queues of people stretched from shops. Hyper-inflation, poverty and hunger is their daily reality.

I apologised to the Anglican bishops of Zimbabwe for the xenophobic attacks their compatriots in South Africa have suffered, and assured them of our support and prayers. Their practical involvement in responding to their people's need for food, education and health care points the way to post-election rebuilding and reconciliation.

This is a kairos moment for them and all of us - an opportunity to seize on the hope that the people of Zimbabwe still hold onto, and to build on it to renew society.

NEW BOOKS FOR CHURCH LIBRARY

The following books are now available in our church library: Mary Allen

The Shack by William Young
Listed under *Fiction* this book contains some good theological arguments. It is an unique, startling account of a father, Mack, coming to terms with the tragic loss of his youngest daughter. God meets him in a way that Mack **needs** at that time. The author does not intend us to think that God comes to all of us in this way, but..... Just read it and

take from it *what you need* to move closer to our Loving Lord.

The Spiritual Revolution by David Tacey

A book that brings together all the different aspect of the recent upsurge in spirituality. It makes for a long intense read, and challenges one to go deeper into prayer.

Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief by Roger Lundin

This is particularly interesting for those who know and enjoy Dickinson's poetry - her 'Art'. There is a great deal of explanation and detail in this book. Do try it when you need to expand your intellectual scope!

Where is God when things go wrong?

A very slim book, that deals succinctly with this huge and common problem. It's like a short-cut version of Philip Yancy's *Where is God when it hurts?* The writer starts with Jodi Ericson Tada, moves through the huge Tsunami, 9/11 and mass shoot-

ings to quotes from Job. A quick read, but thought-provoking. Suitable to launch a Bible-study discussion.

The Challenge of the City by Stuart Murray

What is our role as the Church in our own city? How does our church deal with the particular problems and chal-

lenges? What are they? As we find St John's to be more in a city centre rather than among houses, we need to look at the effect this is having on our outreach and our role in the city. A good book to read if you are really involved in the life of our church.

EDDI & DELYSIA WOLFF'S TRIP TO CAPE TOWN

Max Gibbons

Much of what Eddie has stated is very true indeed but I will attempt to answer some of the questions he asked! Yes, as we become older we often lose a certain degree of our bodily functions but with the correct amount of exercise and correct eating habits, the slowing down process can be vastly decreased. Dr Patrick Holfard stresses this very much in his books and TV programmes.

I do agree that at some stage in one's life we definitely cannot achieve as in the past years and perform without some degree of help but in most cases one does not become a "frail care" person overnight. There are parishioners in our parish of 80 years and older who still enjoy a good game of bowls and others who still garden avidly!

Once again I do wholeheartedly agree with Eddie that, yes, at 50 to 55 years of age, one must not think about but actually put one's name down at a retirement village.

The question of Cape Town where properties are the most expensive in South Africa, I would not quibble about the figures he states, but would point out that there are a number of retirement complexes in the greater Durban area. These are Altersheim in New Germany, Flame Lilly in Malvern and Bill Buchanan in Morningside who, inci-

dentally, were recently advertising in the press that they had vacancies available. The TAFTA organization also has a number of places in Durban.

If one looks further afield, there is a delightful retirement complex with all that Eddi is looking for in Wartburg. The Wartburg units are 1 or 2 bedrooms, and 2 bedroom unit costing approx. R300,000. There is also another at New Hanover which is very similar to Wartburg. Still a further option would be Evelyn House in Richmond. I know there are others as well.

The last point about building – this could be tricky. Firstly the cost of the ground and secondly buildings costs! I personally know a building contractor who said he would not build for under R1,000 per m², probably more depending on the type of finish required. He also stated that builders are now charging upwards of R1,500 per m².

Equating this to Eddi's figures, a 50 m² building would cost R50,000 to R60,000 to build without the land. I was also told that building costs are hardly likely to go down. We already have a shortage of timber in South Africa and with the continuing petrol hikes, transportation costs are definitely not likely to drop.

NOTES FROM THE MARGINS 6

Christopher Cockburn

Truth and consequences

I am delighted to discover Liz Castleden amongst my readers. The item she contributed to the Pentecost *Lantern* ('Is Our Faith Being Tested?') is evidently intended as a response to my 'Notes' (since a miniaturised section of my previous article is inset there). It doesn't refer to anything specific I said, but the quoted passage from Selwyn Hughes certainly seems to engage with, and perhaps contradict, some of the things I have been saying. It asserts the idea that there is one, final, absolute, universal and unchanging truth of the gospel. I imagine many people would instinctively agree with this, but I continue to feel that we need something more than the simple *assertion* of this if we are to come to terms with the issue I have been raising: that Christians have different ideas about their faith – and always have had!

I think Hughes and Liz and the fundamentalists I referred to in my last article are right to insist on a distinction between what we might call 'God's view' (which is absolute) and 'our human view' (which is relative). If we are going to use the word 'truth' at all (as I agree we must), it has to mean something more than just whatever anyone happens to think. I certainly don't hold that all viewpoints are

equally valid. (For a start, it should be clear that I don't rate the validity of fundamentalism very highly!)

Where I differ from them is in their claim to have direct access to this absolute truth. I don't think anyone has access to it. What we have access to is human truth. I can already hear the snorts of derision from the fundamentalists: what a poor thing this merely human truth must be, compared with the truth of God! But before we dismiss 'human truth' too quickly, let's be clear that I am not saying we can know nothing of God, nothing of the truth. That is the fundamentalist way of thinking: unless they can have absolute truth they feel as though they have nothing. And this is precisely their approach to the Bible also: unless every verse is true ('literally' true), they feel they can't be sure that any of it is.

For fundamentalists, human truth seems to be *opposed* to God's truth – they associate it with what they call 'secular humanism'. But the human truth I am referring to here is not opposed to God at all. I simply mean the truth that is available to us as human beings, and this will always be to some extent limited and partial. When Christians differ, it doesn't really help to insist that there is only one truth,

because you still have to go on to show that your position corresponds to this one truth and the other person's doesn't – and that is precisely what is in dispute in the first place. The usefulness of the distinction between 'God's truth' and 'human truth' is not that it validates one position and discredits others, but rather the opposite. It reminds us that, as compared with God, *none of us* has the truth. This is why we should treat any claim to know or speak God's absolute truth with great caution, lest we open ourselves to some very unwelcome consequences. (The tortures of the Spanish Inquisition were legitimated by just such a claim, to take an admittedly extreme example from Christian history.)

Claiming to know the absolute, universal, final truth is to deny our humanness and claim equality with God. Isn't this in fact the 'pride' that fundamentalists so often attribute to those who 'stubbornly' disagree with them? People speak of the mystery of God because God will always be beyond our formulations. That doesn't mean we can't know anything of God: it means that there is always more for us to learn. We acknowledge that we are on a journey towards God. The alternative is to imagine that we have arrived, that we know everything already. This is to deny the work of the Holy Spirit, which is to guide us *into* all truth (John 16:13) – an ongoing process. Hughes says we must not try to change the gospel, but that is not what I am proposing when I say that we need change, or new ideas. It is new *understandings* of the gospel that we need, so that we grow ever closer to the truth of Jesus. But, to judge from the way she refers to 'strange and wonderful ideas', Liz seems suspicious of any suggestion that there can be a new way of looking at Christianity.

Isn't it just possible that we have become so wedded to one way of looking at Christianity (inherited from the past) that we prevent the Spirit from leading us any further? If Hughes is worried about the gospel becoming 'contaminated', shouldn't he consider the possibility that this has happened in the past, and that part of our task now is to remove some of the limited understandings of our ancestors? Please note I said 'some', not 'all'. We cannot do without our traditions: they have made us what we are. But people in the past didn't get everything right any more than we will. To think that everything must change is as mistaken as thinking that nothing must. There is no simple, infallible formula to show us what should change and what should not, and perhaps we are being called to grow beyond our need for one. But this doesn't leave us helpless: we have tradition, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the counsel of other Christians – and, yes, we have the Bible.

Because people like me don't view the Bible the same way they do, fundamentalists often want to suggest that our views are unscriptural. It's an easy accusation to make, but those who do so should be challenged to justify it case by case. I would maintain that my main point in this article – that we cannot know the absolute truth – is entirely scriptural. Perhaps I could simply remind readers of one of the most famous passages in Paul's letters, 1 Corinthians 13? Verse 12 reads: 'For now we see through a glass darkly', or in a more modern translation: 'At present we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but one day we shall see face to face.' Paul is quite clear: 'My knowledge now is partial.' Or in 2 Corinthians 5:7: 'We walk by faith and not by sight.'

Hughes is probably correct to say that Christians talking about their church traditions will 'be apart', but I think he is mistaken to suggest that merely talking about Christ instead will bring them together. I am sure people from all Christian traditions feel that they *are* talking about Christ. The point is that they understand Christ in different ways. Hughes ends by saying that in Christ 'all things hold together; out of Him all things fly apart'. Well, the church does seem to have flown apart. We hear about divisions at St John's, and the Anglican Church, as it approaches the next Lambeth conference, faces divisions serious enough to split it. Isn't that a sign that people are not 'in Christ'? Perhaps it is. But here's the crux of the matter yet again: merely making that point takes us no further towards discerning which of the opposing viewpoints (if any) is the true one! It is of course always tempting to blame the other side for causing disunity. Without *them*, we want to say, there would be peace and harmony. Perhaps there would. But would this peace and harmony in itself show that we had found the mind of Christ? Of course not. We could simply have united round our prejudices. Unity is not an ultimate value. The crowd who yelled 'Crucify him!' were admirably united, but hardly 'in Christ'.

Whatever truth is available to us will only emerge as we draw on the combined resources of tradition, scripture, the inner light of the Spirit, our own capacity for reason and compassion, and the discernment of others with whom we talk, argue, and pray – and for whom we need to spell out as clearly as we can what it is we mean. But in the end each of us will have to decide for ourselves, since none of these resources is infallible. To imagine that they are – that we can gain access to absolute truth – runs the risk of promoting them to the place that can only be occupied by God.

10 REASONS TO BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE

Submitted by a happy Fundamentalist!

1. ITS HONESTY

The Bible is painfully honest. It shows Jacob, the father of its "chosen people", to be a deceiver. It describes Moses, the lawgiver, as an insecure, reluctant leader. It portrays David not only as Israel's most loved king, general and spiritual leader but as one who took another man's wife and then, to cover his own sin, conspired to have her husband killed. The Bible represents human nature as hostile to God. It predicts a future full of trouble. It teaches that the road to heaven is narrow and the way to hell is wide. Scripture was clearly not

written for those who want simple answers or an easy, optimistic view of religion and human nature.

2. ITS PRESERVATION

Just as the modern state of Israel was emerging from thousands of years of dispersion, a Bedouin shepherd discovered one of the most important archeological treasures of our time. In a cave northwest of the Dead Sea, a broken jar yielded documents that had been hidden for two millennia. Additional finds produced manuscripts that predated the oldest known copies by 1,000 years. One of the most important was a copy of

'Isaiah. It revealed a document that is essentially the same as the book of Isaiah that appears in our own Bibles. The Dead Sea scrolls emerged from the dust like a symbolic handshake to a nation coming home. They discredited the claims of those who believed that the original Bible had been lost to time and tampering.

3. ITS CLAIMS FOR ITSELF

It is important to know what the Bible says about itself. If the authors of Scripture had not claimed to speak for God, it would be presumptuous for us to make that claim for them. We would also have a different kind of problem. We would have a collection of unsolved mysteries, embodied in historical and ethical literature. But we would not have a book that has inspired the building of countless churches and synagogues all over the world. A Bible that did not claim to speak in behalf of God would not have become foundational to the faith of hundreds of millions of Christians and Jews. But with much supporting evidence and argument, the Bible's authors did claim to be inspired by God. Because millions have staked their present and eternal well-being on those claims, the Bible cannot be a good book if its authors consistently lied about their source of information.

4. ITS MIRACLES

Israel's exodus from Egypt provides a historical basis for believing that God revealed Himself to Israel. If the Red Sea did not part as Moses said it did, the Old Testament loses its authority to speak on behalf of God. The New Testament is just as dependent upon miracles. If Jesus did not rise bodily from the dead, the apostle Paul admits that the Christian faith is built on a lie (1 Cor. 15v14-17). To show its credibility, the New Testament named its witnesses and did so within a time frame that enabled those claims to be tested (1 Cor. 15 v1-8). Many of the witnesses ended up as martyrs, not for abstract moral or spiritual convictions but for their claim that Jesus had risen from the dead. While martyrdom is not unusual, the basis on which these people gave their lives is what's important. Many have died for what they believed to be the truth. But people do not die for what they know to be a lie.

5. ITS UNITY

Forty different authors writing over a period of 1,600 years penned the 66 books of the Bible. Four hundred silent years separated the 39 books of the Old Testament from the 27 of the New Testament. Yet from Genesis to Revelation, they tell one unfolding story. Together they give consistent answers to the most important questions: Why are we here? How can we come to terms with our fears? How can we get along? How can we rise above our circumstances and keep hope alive? How can we make peace with God? The Bible's consistent answers to these questions show that the Scriptures are not many books, but one.

6. ITS HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL ACCURACY

Down through the ages, many have doubted the historical and geographical accuracy of the Bible. Yet modern archeologists have repeatedly unearthed evidence of the people, places and cultures described in the Scriptures. Time after time, the descriptions in the biblical record have been shown to be more reliable than the speculations of scholars. The modern visitor to the museums and lands of the Bible cannot help but come away impressed with the real geographical and historical backdrop of the biblical text.

7. ITS ENDORSEMENT BY CHRIST

Many have spoken well of the Bible but no endorsement is as compelling as that of Jesus of Nazareth. He recommended the Bible not only by His words but by His life. In times of personal temptation, public teaching and personal suffering, He made it clear that He believed the Old Testament Scriptures were more than a national tradition (Mt 4 v1-11; 5 v 17-19). He believed the Bible was a book about Himself. To His countrymen He said "*You search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life*" (Jn 5v39-40)

8. ITS PROPHETIC ACCURACY

From the days of Moses, the Bible predicted events no one wanted to believe. Before Israel went into the Promised Land, Moses predicted that Israel would be unfaithful, that she would lose the land God was giving her and that she would be dispersed throughout all the world, regathered, and then re-established (Dt.28 – 31). Central to Old Testament prophecy was the promise of a Messiah who would save God's people from their sins and eventually bring judgment and peace to the whole world.

9. ITS SURVIVAL

The books of Moses were written 500 years before the earliest Hindu Scriptures. Moses wrote Genesis 2,000 years before Muhammad penned the Koran. During that long history, no other book has been as loved or as hated as the Bible. No other book has been so consistently bought, studied and quoted as this book. While millions of other titles come and go, the Bible is still the book by which all other books are measured. While often ignored by those who are uncomfortable with its teachings, it is still the central book of Western civilization.

10. ITS POWER TO CHANGE LIVES

Unbelievers often point to those who claim to believe in the Bible without being changed by it. But history is also marked by those who have been bettered by this book. The Ten Commandments have been a source of moral direction to countless numbers of people. The changed lives of people like the apostle Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Newton, Leo Tolstoy and C S Lewis illustrate the difference the Bible can make. Even entire nations or tribes, like the Celts of Ireland, the wild Vikings of Norway or the Auca Indians of Ecuador have been transformed by the Word of God and the unprecedented life and significance of Jesus Christ.