

DIOCESE OF THE HIGHVELD

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PASTORAL LETTER FROM MEMBERS OF CHAPTER AND TRUST BOARD

Dear People of God

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

It is with great concern that we are writing this letter to you in response to the concerted attacks by the newspaper, *Sunday World* on the Diocese and in particularly the Office of the Archbishop and our Bishop. We believe that this is not an attack on individuals, but on the Church at large. The Bishop is the Guardian of the Faith, Focus of Unity and Shepherd of the Flock of God, and as such an attack on his Office is an attack on Christ himself who is "*the pioneer and perfecter of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:2).

Therefore, Members of Chapter and Trust Board of the Diocese of the Highveld at its Urgent Meeting held at the Diocesan Boardroom on the 27th September, 2023, at 16h00-18h00, resolved the following:

1. That for the past couple of months there has been a series of articles published in the *Sunday World* newspaper about the Church as an institution, the Archbishop and his office, the Bishop of the Highveld and his office, and the two clergy who have been the subject of the vitriolic attacks and accusations;
2. That such attacks are not just an affront to those mentioned above, but also go to the heart of our faith, the structure and Order of our Church, and the Church as members of the Body of Christ;
3. That the Chapter in its advisory capacity to the Bishop, has supported the processes that have been established, according to the Canons and Rules of the Diocese, in order to protect the process from undue influence, but also to ensure that the concerns of the parishioners are properly ventilated in a secure and safe environment;
4. That all such processes, including the Gender Committee of the Diocese and Safe and Inclusive Church Commission of the ACSA, have taken place and furnished their reports, which reports have been shared with the parishioners and their Parish Council, the reports were released and received and there was even consensus about reconciliation, which was celebrated in a service on 3rd September 2023 at St Boniface, Vosloorus.
5. That the recent article of the *Sunday World* on the 24th of September, continuing to attack the institution of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop, the Bishop of the Highveld, and certain clergy is not only reprehensible, but also defamatory in nature and character of all the above. This article appeared regardless of the efforts of the Diocesan Registrar, Mr Jonathan Cornelius giving them a detailed report of the processes;

6. That the Urgent Meeting resolved to write to *Sunday World* and demand a retraction of their statement at their next issue of publication. In the event of failure or refusal to retract, the Diocese reserve the right to pursue legal proceedings against the paper, it's editor, journalist and all those within the Diocese who have been involved in feeding the paper with lies, misinformation, deception, misrepresentation, and innuendos;

The meeting was held in the absence of the Bishop, but with his approval and he is fully aware of the content of this letter.

In conclusion, there is a saying attributed to the Philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797) that reads: "*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.*" Evil is prevailing and we cannot keep quiet any longer because there are members of the Body of Christ who is suffering and St Paul reminds us that, "*If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.*" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

We call upon you as the Body of Christ in this Diocese to keep on praying for our Bishop, and the institution of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. Remember the words of our Saviour Jesus Christ: "*I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*" (John 13:34).

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Members of Chapter and Trust Board
Wednesday, 27 September 2023