



Report from the Anglican Board of Education for Southern Africa: August 2015

To use the words of Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, we have a sense that “God is smiling on us” and I trust this to be true.

This year, 2015, has been a journey of faith for the Anglican Board of Education. The year started with a new CEO and three strategic focus areas. It had little money in the bank but the promise that Anglican Church schools would support this initiative financially. It had the full support of the Archbishop and the Bishops of the Province and a start up donation from the Church.

Towards the end of 2014 the Board engaged in several strategy workshops and identified the following three strategic pillars:

- To serve existing Anglican schools
- To develop new Anglican schools
- To galvanise parishes and communities to become engaged with education at a local level.

To serve existing Anglican Church Schools

The first pillar recognises the importance of all our historic Anglican Church schools and their extraordinary contribution to all the countries served by the Province of the Anglican Church. It is from this base that a substantial financial contribution has been made which has sustained ABESA in 2015. This contribution has come from 19 independent Anglican Church schools in South Africa. Presently our work has focused on South Africa but Bishop Peter Lee and I plan to visit Swaziland in November and Lesotho in the beginning of 2016. Bishop Adam Taaso, the Bishop of Lesotho, serves on the Board and we know good work is being done in this Diocese where a new Anglican Church high school is being built at Leribe.

During my first six months in office I have visited and met with the heads and chaplains of all the independent Anglican schools in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Gauteng and will meet with the Heads and Chaplains in Kwa Zulu Natal in August. By the end of August I will have visited a total of 42 schools. I also attended the Chaplains’ Conference in Grahamstown for two days. Here I was able to interact with the Chaplains and appreciate some of the challenges that they face in their ministry in schools. I arranged three meetings of Chaplains and Heads (one each in the Cape, Gauteng and Kwa Zulu Natal) to discuss the characteristics of an Anglican Church school. Out of these workshops a self-appraisal document will be developed. This will provide an instrument which can be used to assess the Christian Anglican character of our schools. It will be a document that will enable the leadership of a school to be reflective about the practice in their schools, and challenge them to hold fast to their founding principles as an Anglican Church school. The seven areas which are being discussed are as follows:

Appraising the distinctive religious character of an Anglican school.

The following are essential characteristics of an Anglican Church school and each would need to be put forward as a goal to which we would want to journey.

1. The schools educational philosophy is fundamentally Christian. If we were to ask ourselves the question: "What is the soul of our school?" some pointers would be that life is considered a gift of God and therefore we should live it with generosity and gratitude. Every child is beloved and belongs and is a child of God.
2. There is regular worship. Here God is acknowledged daily as the Creator and source of our life and strength. As humans we have been created as spiritual beings with the desire to discover God's meaning and purpose in our lives, and endless horizons beyond ourselves.
3. Children need to be taught the faith. This is essentially about teaching a Christian worldview and children have freedom to identify with this understanding of life. The focus must not be on teaching dogma and doctrines but rather it should be about relationships. Children need to understand that they have an inherent spirituality and we need to be talking about the mystery of God and how to be hopeful, loving, trustworthy and patient, and how to pray. Children need to have their eyes opened to the will and work of God and the seeds need to be sown so that they will be able to put their hope and trust in God.
4. Governance and leadership. There needs to be a commitment from the school board and the leadership of the school to ensuring that the school maintains its Christian character as is essential to the mission of the school. This would be reflected in vision and policy statements and in the branding of the school. The authority of the Church needs to be acknowledged through the Bishop and Chaplain. The school would report to the Diocesan Synod and Council and the Church would acknowledge the school as an Anglican Church school. The authority of the Church would be integrated into the governance of the school.
5. Generosity of Spirit. One of the hallmarks of an Anglican Church school is a spirit of kindness, compassion and respect for all peoples. This expresses itself in healthy relationships in the school and toward the wider community. Concern for the common good is shown through community service and support of charity and in healthy relationships with those of other faiths.
6. Truth, Beauty and Goodness. An Anglican Church school aspires to grow in all these characteristics and therefore serves its community with a quality curriculum, disciplined teaching and learning, supportive and loving pastoral care, committed and hardworking teachers, and children who are engaged and participating in the learning environment. Quality assurance is part of an Anglican Church school. An Anglican Church school is a "good" school.
7. Signs and Symbols. In the school there will be signs and symbols of the Christian faith which remind the community of their faith heritage and challenge them to continue to live by faith. An obvious example is a chapel which is used for worship but there are many ways to show the school's commitment to the faith.

Once this document has been finalized it will become a resource for schools and help them to define and claim their Anglican identity.

Four other needs have been identified under this first strategic pillar of supporting existing Anglican Schools. The first is to help new teachers to an Anglican Church school understand the ethos and value of such a faith affiliation. This would find expression in workshops for teachers. The second is to work with the chaplains in developing an appropriate Divinity curriculum. The third is to call all the "outreach officers" of these schools together to pool resources and ideas, and to gain a sense of the "collective impact" of Anglican Church schools on the wider community for the common good. The fourth need relates to requests from independent schools for affiliation with ABESA. There are several established independent schools, who are not currently Anglican, that have made inquiries about becoming members of ABESA and therefore by definition Anglican Church schools. Without being too restrictive I would suggest that they must be willing to begin a journey toward fulfilling all the seven characteristics and then become associate members of this organization

until they are formally accepted by their respective dioceses. It is with appreciation that I note this interest from various organisations that seek some kind of umbrella body to which they can be affiliated.

It has been an extraordinary privilege to visit schools and learn about the good work that is being done and the commitment to doing it better. I have also been conscious of the presence of God in these schools through the faith commitment of Christian heads and teachers. I sense a need for them to be given authority to be bold in their Christian leadership and witness. Much of my time spent, especially with Heads of schools, has been to listen to their particular needs and encourage them in their task. I have thus been able to play a pastoral role in encouraging these educational leaders in what is often a very lonely and challenging task.

The second strategic pillar is to grow new Anglican Church schools.

This includes schools that are young, that have not reached maturity and that often face significant challenges.

1. In this regard we are excited about the start of the Archbishop Thabo Makgoba Vuleka Boys' School starting in January 2016 at St Joseph's Centre in Sophiatown, Johannesburg. This is under the leadership of Mrs. Melanie Sharland and her team. Despite challenges regarding zoning and registration we are confident that this will begin. It has classrooms ready to receive its first intake of Grade O's and Grade 1's.
2. Land has been purchased by the Diocese of False Bay to start a Pre School in Delft. I am grateful to Mr Phillip Saunders for his drive and energy in this project. They are presently forming a steering committee in association with the Parish of St Matthew's
3. We are at the first stages of talks regarding a school in Heidelberg, Gauteng. Land has been offered and a business plan is being drawn up.
4. The family of Bishop Alphaeus Zulu, the first black bishop of Zululand and one of the great leaders of our church, wish to erect a school in his honour either in Durban or in Melmoth. I am working with his daughter, Mrs. Lulu Letlape, on this project.
5. Kwasa College in Daggafontein, Springs, is a new school from reception to Grade 2 with a vision to grow to Grade 12. It is the result of the commitment and hard work of Rev Sharron Dinnie. She has, with ABESA's support, partnered with St Dunstan's College.
6. The African School for Excellence is also keen to partner with Kwasa. Their model, which has been created by founder Jay Kloppenberg, is a very effective educational model that significantly reduces cost but at the same time enhances quality.
7. St Michael's Khayelitsha. This independent primary school faces some major challenges regarding governance, financial controls and staff morale. Fortunately both Phillip Saunders and Robert Ferrandi are engaged with the school, the church wardens and with the Bishop of False Bay, and are addressing these issues.
8. St Mark's College Jane Furse, Limpopo. I visited both the primary and high schools of St Mark's College for three days at the invitation of Bishop Martin Breytenbach. We have developed a plan for the future improvement of the school with the support of the Alumni of the school. The mind shift must be that it is an Anglican Church school supported by the government rather than a government school on Church land. There have been meetings with alumni, staff and with the previous head Mr. Peter Anderson. . I am excited by the prospect of developing a strong Anglican brand that determines the ethos, values and quality of the school, with the support of Government funding.

9. There is a possibility of a school in Lombardy East, on the edge of Alexandra Township, being linked to the Anglican Church Manche Masemola. ABESA is investigating the feasibility of this initiative.
10. I have visited Zonnebloem Schools, The Good Shepherd, Grahamstown, and Holy Cross School, Grahamstown.
11. There are 5 schools in Soweto that were Anglican Church schools, but now have very limited Anglican identity. We are investigating the possibility of rekindling our influence.
12. Bensonvale College, Sterkspruit, remains on the agenda although we have made little progress.
13. We have been approached by several schools which are presently young independent schools, often serving the poor, but which are looking for a place to belong and from which to receive support. We are talking to them.

The third strategic pillar is to galvanise parishes and communities to engage with their local schools.

Although there have been some parishes that have contacted me, for example St Luke's Orchards, regarding ABESA, I don't think our message has reached the local parish. It will take much effort to communicate and market the vision and strategy of ABESA. Much of this effort is dependent on the Dioceses owning the vision of ABESA as a major strategy of the Church and communicating this through their communication channels. It will also require a strong website and face book presence.

The Social Project, an initiative of "Growing the Church" and "Anglicans Ablaze", driven by Michael Darby and Rev Trevor Pearce focusses on supervised afternoon homework and study classes using Anglican Church facilities. They have contacted me to discuss how the energy and commitment from volunteers who attended an Anglicans Ablaze conference in Cape Town could be used in a partnership with ABESA. We will meet in the near future to discuss this initiative.

There is also the work of several churches in Early Childhood Development (ECD). Many churches run crèches and the managers face various challenges for example around qualifications and registration. Reggio Emilia is a movement in ECD supported by St Mary's School, Waverley, which recently hosted a conference of educators, many of whom came from township ECD centres. Bishop Peter Lee is chairman of the Reggio Emilia Board and its members play a significant supportive role to grow and develop ECD educators.

In Kwa Zulu Natal Bishop Rubin called a one day conference for Anglican educators that was attended by about 400 participants. It was perceived as extremely valuable, with a simple but profound commitment made by all to do their jobs well, as well as serve as witnesses for Christ.

Bishop Peter Lee continues to chair an inter faith meeting with the Gauteng Dept. of Education to implement the 2013 memorandum of understanding regarding how Faith Based Organisations can engage with schools.

Establish Office and Staff

St Mary's School Waverley have generously given ABESA office accommodation and have kindly allowed us to use their facilities on several occasions, including the wonderful launch of ABESA and induction of the CEO on the 24th March, which was followed by a lovely cocktail party. ABESA has appointed Mr. Phillip Saunders in a part time position in the Western Cape and Mr. Nick Norman as a part time finance manager. In the Western Cape there is a regional committee chaired by Mr. Robert Ferrandi. This committee continues the work started by the original ABE, and are working with 42 church

schools on church land which are funded by the Government, and where the land is rented from the church. Mr Phillip Saunders reports directly to this committee and to the CEO in Johannesburg.

Conclusion

The Anglican Board of Education is beginning to make an impact in schools. I have served on the selection committee for a chaplain at one of these schools and have been invited to serve on the selection committee for a new head at another. It is encouraging to see the enormous commitment of women and men to the teaching profession and the enormous amount of good will that exists. The Anglican Church can be very proud of the outstanding schools it has under its care and it has potential to make a significant difference in the lives and education of all of God's people. I am grateful to the vision of his Grace Archbishop Thabo Magkoba. I am also grateful for the commitment of the chairman of ABESA, Bishop Peter Lee. We have worked closely together and I have appreciated his wisdom. I thank all the Board members for their support.

Rev Roger Cameron