



# FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ANGLICAN BISHOP DIOCESE OF JOHANNESBURG



Our Vision is: To Achieve the Practice of the Ministry of All Believers

## Pastoral Letter Vol 5 29 April 2020

Dear Saints

The celebration of Easter this year was certainly different to anything we have ever previously experienced. In our Diocese and around the world, the festivities were marked by the use of modern technology that we had never imagined would be possible or necessary. We could give thanks for the good news of the Risen Christ as a result of contemporary means of communication. In turn, we must give thanks to the God of all Creation who gives to men and women the ingenuity to invent new ways of communicating with one another across many different boundaries.

That is good news, and we should think about its implications. For the God of Creation who enables this will inevitably lead his people to a discovery of ways to deal with the Coronavirus, and no doubt to find a cure. It is in this God who moves in such mysterious ways that, as Christians, we place our trust and celebrate the Resurrection. There are brilliant scientists throughout the world, even as you read this, working tirelessly to release their creativity to find a cure. There are millions of health workers who are dedicating themselves and working non-stop to minister to the sick and dying. We also owe gratitude to the many who minister to the dear departed and their grieving loved ones. To all these people, we give thanks and pray that their efforts will be rewarded.

We are at a moment now in our country in which we are about to go into a less severe period of lockdown. This does not mean that we can relax in any way our diligence in doing those things which are proven to stave off the Coronavirus:

- Wash hands with soap and water, or an alcohol- or chlorine-based sanitiser;
- Maintain social distancing and wear masks;
- **Stay at home** unless you are required to be out of your house.

In this period, Parishes must continue to find creative ways and means of ministering in every way to our people. Priests and lay leaders face an enormous challenge. Given the way they have responded so far; I have no doubt they will rise to the occasion. These are important weeks in our Church calendar - ones that lead us to Pentecost, when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. I ask that we will use this time to reflect and act where appropriate to carry out our call to the ministry of presence.



The Church is strongest when it is present with her people: where they work, live, and suffer. It is difficult in these circumstances. But it is a calling that is central to us as Christians. Christ was *with* the leper. Christ was *with* the woman at the well.

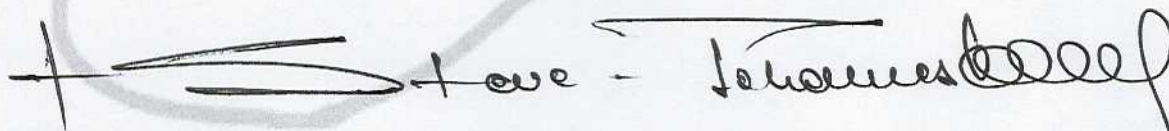
We have to find ways to do this even at this tough time in our history as a nation, without putting ourselves and anyone else at risk, given the voracious manner in which the Coronavirus infects all persons around us, without anyone knowing. Online communication is excellent. But e-mails can be impersonal. Nothing substitutes one-on-one communication. Picking up the phone to everyone on your parish roll has no substitute. This is especially so now when there are more "shut-ins" and people feeling lonelier than ever before. It is also an apt way to let everyone know that their Parish is diligently at work, being pastoral to them, and telling people that resources are still needed to keep the work going.

I know that you will reflect on this, and that your work will continue. I give thanks for the work that has been done by Parishes, our organisations and schools. The manner in which our Diocesan staff has continued to work with all structures is praiseworthy. Mr Sibusiso Zungu, our Diocesan Executive Officer, recently held a productive meeting with Church wardens and treasurers of Parishes on Zoom to ensure that administrative functions continue to run smoothly. I have similarly held a meeting with clergy. My sincere thanks goes to the Diocesan Trustees, the Diocesan Finance Committee and the Diocesan Council for the manner in which they assisted and worked with me at this time. On 1 May we will be having a Zoom meeting with all young children and youth, in line with our focus area of ministry to young people. It speaks well for the future that these online meetings have been facilitated by representatives of our young people.

It is clear that Church will not be the same for a long time. But what doesn't change is Christ's command to love one another. We need to recognise that the authorities are telling us that the Coronavirus infections will peak as we head towards the fourth quarter of this year. That means a long winter in which we have to care for our people, sustain, and grow our Church. In doing this, we must be nimble and remain mentally alert and not allow "Coronavirus fatigue" to get the better of us. In all of this, let us laugh together, for laughter releases positive hormones in our bodies that give us joy and hope and, in a healthy way, infects us with happiness and goodwill. That is what is needed: good stories, even amongst the battles we will have as a result of Coronavirus. It will enable us to look after other people, as well as ourselves. And sing! Singing also brings out those same positive vibes and builds fellowship. I have heard of choirs, amongst whom are our members, practising online and how, by them coming together online, they are still finding community of spirit together and the will to persevere.

I am sure Paul is speaking of this in Philippians 4: 6-7. I urge you to follow his lead: "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Grace, peace and joy to all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Moreo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the text.

The Right Revd Dr Steve Moreo