

# 9<sup>th</sup> ORDINARY SESSION OF THE DIOCESAN SYNOD

## ACK Diocese of Bondo

**THEME: READY TO SERVE** (Joshua 1: 16)

### **BISHOP'S CHARGE**

Dear people of God. Peace be upon you.

We wish to convey to you our Christian greetings and abundant blessings as you gather here this morning. We were here in March 25<sup>th</sup> for election and induction of new officers of the synod and provincial representatives. We want to affirm that the servants of God you elected have already started playing their roles and we wish them fruitful engagements during their term of office. I wish to express gratitude to the members who have served in various committees of the synod and all other synod representatives whose contribution in every way has added great value to our ministry. May peace of the Lord be with you.

Joshua 1:1-18

**Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go”**

God gave us a mission to the Diocese of Bondo and we wish to reiterate that we have enjoyed serving you as your unworthy servant who through the grace of God has accepted this enormous responsibility. Leading the people to the promised land is not a walk in the park. It requires God's shadow walking along with us, giving us strength from time to time, impacting on us wisdom to make the right decision if not the correct ones. It is through the divine favor that we were able to take up the challenge and consolidate our interests to become our focus for ministry. We are people whom the Lord has favoured with desire to hold one another's hand and offer a shoulder where the weak and heavy laden would lean on. We feel privileged to be joined in the path of sustainability and evangelistic enterprises. Yes, I want to reiterate that we had to wade through the waters of Jordan full of scarcities and anxieties. But God granted us the favor of remaining resilient and focused. We had to listen and obey a greater voice of hope and promise, a voice that guaranteed us strength and power and wisdom and above all, the voice of hope. Our clarion response was and still remains:

## **“Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go”**

Sometimes we make vows without prayers and end up forgetting about them during hard moments. We must be ready to listen to the greater voice that calls on us at a time like this, to stand tall and be counted amongst the saints that stand for truth, justice and righteousness. This synod has been called at a time when the Kenyan nation is undergoing the worst dictatorship in recent history. It is at a time when considerations for self-preservation tend to overshadow the collective will of God’s purpose for us that commands us to love one another, to pray without ceasing, to forgive those who wrong us, and to trust and obey him who is higher than us. We are called at a time when the economic situation in the country has limited financial capacities of many families with many parishes failing to meet their obligations. We are called at a time when loyalty gauge is determined by the purity of our blood rather than the image of Christ-like character expected of us. We are called at a time when our community is openly profiled and no one seems to care. We are called at a time when respect for a bishop has become an illusion and anybody would have the courage to stone him and smash his vehicle without any sense of remorse in the name of demonstration. We are called at a time when spraying unarmed young boys with bullets is considered an act of heroism.

We have come from far, and the Lord God had been faithful in opening for us the gates of opportunities for his treasures of hope, wisdom, courage, and willingness to soldier on.

### **Reflections on our Past achievements**

Friends allow us to take you through the reflections on some of the tasks we have carried out for the last three years based on our previous resolutions:

#### **1. Strengthening departmental capacities for growth**

One of our commitments was to strengthen the capacities of our departments to ensure that they meet their preferred objectives. So far the departments have yielded positive output and creating a well balanced approach to our mission as a diocese. For example, the KAMA has experienced indelible growth in terms of enrolment and activities and level of commitment to diocesan obligations. The Mothers Union has equally experienced growth in both number and engagements in numerous activities in the diocese. Currently we have a viable Christian bookshop that is serving even non Anglicans. KAYO and Children Ministry have also come up with KAYO having also undertaken leadership training from NCKK sponsored program.

We have also had mission activities all over the diocese spearheaded by the Mission Director Ven. Dr. Samuel Sudhe. We have hosted music extravaganza

that has been a way of reliving our traditional Anglican hymnals across the diocese. Choirs have become our ambassadors even across the diocese. We also cannot forget the place of Lay Readers. We want to thank Bishop Emily and Ven. Sudhe for spearheading the training of our Lay Readers and also launching Bondo Lay Readers Welfare. It is our hope that these achievements will be sustained by our commitment and creative thinking for growth and expansion of the kingdom of God.

## **2. Resourcing the Church**

Over the years the church has been entirely funded by quota contributions from member parishes, however, this has not been very effective and more often than not leaving the diocese with huge deficit in its annual budget. The financial report will inform you more about the financial situation. Our focus here is to brainstorm on the viability of other sources of income which have not been given serious considerations by parishes in this diocese:

### **(i) TITHING**

Tithing is a common practice in many churches especially in urban areas. This is a form of giving whereby a person gives to the church the tenth of his entire earning. Tithing is purely the 10% of our income given from the heart for the purposes of supporting the ministry. The quantity and quality of giving is determined by the willing heart, the heart that is convicted by the desire to show gratitude for what God has done in our life. People used to give generously, but the quality of generous giving can be compromised if it is pegged on conditionality, the desire to prove a point, or under duress. When we give tithes we express our gratitude to the great giver of abundance. The story of the widow who gave all that she had drew the attention of the Lord in a situation where other givers gave measurably. Many churches are now embracing tithing as a means of resourcing. It has been successful in one of our parishes of Usigu, All Saints Cathedral Nairobi and many Pentecostal churches. Eng. Stephen Auma had worked on a paper on giving that we shall circulate to all members. It gives a sharp view on the need for giving and critical perspectives required of Christian stewardship. Currently we have very few Christians about three who are tithing to support the diocese. If all of us in our small way would adopt and encourage tithing as the primary mode of thanksgiving, we will be far in terms of our financial obligation. The diocese of Nairobi is 100% sustained by tithing from parishes. Our heavenly Father will surely reward those who give humbly and cheerfully. As Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others." ([Mark 12:43](#)). So let us give generously and humbly, knowing that our Father will reward us! Tithing thus is a manifestation of true worship where we empty our heart to God in a form of appreciation.

## (ii) THANKSGIVING SERVICES

Apart from tithing which is a primary source of financing the church, we wish to uphold other forms of thanksgiving events that equally can help the church receive funds and other donations for its social ministry. Key among them include but not limited to the following:

1. ***Birthday Anniversaries:*** Celebrating birth days is a milestone event. It reminds us of the love and mercies of God who alone sustains us till we witness another birthday. Some people are born but may not live to witness even their first birthday. Every moment in our life more so a year celebrated marks a new year of engagement with the Lord and we cannot take it for granted. We need to encourage people to celebrate their birthdays with thanksgiving in our churches. Let the birthdays be a big event that would also be in our calendars. If every person in a church would be celebrating a birthday with a thanksgiving, the church will realize that everyone becomes a source of hope to the church.
2. **Wedding anniversaries:** Marriage is a social institution that determines the foundation of a family. More often than not, we fail to observe our marriage anniversaries thus taking it for granted. We are in a moment when marital conflicts are on the rise with divorce cases treated as normal. Even in the house of clergy, marriage is becoming an endangered institution. There are, however, many challenges associated with marriage that can be solved when we revisit our marital vows. For this reason, it is important that we celebrate our marriage anniversaries with thanksgiving, expressing our gratitude to God for giving us one more chance to share our love with our spouses. I want to urge all of us to make a bold step and treat this as church event worth observing with gratitude.
3. **Death anniversaries:** celebrating death anniversaries is a common practice that informs part of our worship. We remember the departed and share our joyous moment with them in the spirit of worship and remembrance. Many churches have been furnished with pews and other donations from such events. Annual events can be part of our calendrical engagements and expectations for giving.
4. **Employments and promotions:** some people take employment as a fruit of their own wit, success or reward given by others. We have many people who are unemployed despite the fact that they are educated and have all the prerequisites. Most university graduates are doing things which are not related to their lines of education. We must learn to give thanks not only for making it possible for us to get jobs but also to sustain them. Many people never think of giving thanks even for their promotion. Our promotion may not be possible without God working

behind the scene. How many people who can stay on one job grade without being considered for promotion? Let's adopt the culture of appreciating our successes through thanksgiving.

5. **Recovery from poor health:** life is a precious gift and more often than not it is subjected to various threats including accidents, sickness, deaths, stresses etc. sometimes we take our health casually and good health as natural. Time has come that we must appreciate our recovery from sickness, escape from death and other life threatening events. We must behave like one of the ten lepers by going back to celebrate our joy with the master of life.
6. **Offertory:** offertory is part of our Christian worship. It is an expression of a joyous giving for the purpose of acknowledging God's blessings. Offertory is the most common offerings given in the church especially during public worship. We wish to reiterate that our hearts are yet to be liberated to appreciate that giving must come from the abundance of the heart. Mean giving is wrong. People struggle during offertory searching for coins to give but would be ready to donate big money for other things. We must appreciate the culture of generous giving. When giving goes up even our lay readers would be well taken care of. Our generosity must supersede the pharisaic standards and meet expectation for God's glory

### 3. Capacity Building

Over the years our focus on capacity building has been slow but steady. We have empowered many clergies with various skills and Lay evangelists too have received training. This is part of our strategic intervention in enhancing the capacity of our Lay and Ordained ministers. It has been our desire that our clergy should attain a first degree as the minimum qualification however due to factors beyond our control this has not been realized. We envisage that in five years our lay evangelist will be enrolled for basic biblical education as a way of equipping them with knowledge for the service. In ten years we should have a policy that the basic qualification for lay readers and evangelists should be Diplomas in relevant field whereas for those aspiring for Ordained ministry be a first degree.

As part of our prayers we wish to recognize the following progress of some of our clergy:

- (i) Rev. Asa Agooti pursuing Masters degree in the US
- (ii) Rev. Ambrose Adegba Pursuing D.Min degree in the US on special arrangement program
- (iii) Ven. George Omil Pursuing Masters in Business Administration  
GLUK

- (iv) Rev. Captain Carolyn Adhola graduated with Masters in Theology currently serving as Acting priest in charge at St Mary Magdalene Episcopal church
- (v) Rev. Captain Dorothy licensed priest in the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and Middle East Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf

Apart from the above we also have some of our clergy in diaspora with some having direct canonical obedience to the diocese while others originally come from our diocese but owe their canonical obedience to other dioceses. We want to encourage all the clergy working outside the diocese but consider Bondo diocese as their home of birth to play a great role in building the diocese. They should be encouraged to identify with the diocese.

#### **4. Performance and Appraisal Policy**

There are a total of 77 clergy serving in the diocese some as part time and others are in full time service ministry. With a total of 50 parishes, every serving clergy must deposit a great deal of commitment, competence and resilience in matters management. Good management of a parish is critical to its success. For this reason, we decided to merge some three parishes which had not been performing under one umbrella Missionary Parishes. Our main focus is not the number of parishes we have but how viable the parishes are in terms of meeting all their obligations as going concerns. In this respect we intend to develop performance appraisal policy for all church workers that will determine among other things, releasement, retention, promotion or deployment.

#### **5. Partnership**

Partnership had been one of our major areas of focus for the last three years and I wish to reiterate that we have established a working partnership with Trinity Church New York that has supported our synod plaza with substantial amount. We also established partnership with the Diocese of Sheffield in the UK. The two bishops of Sheffield have visited Bondo and recently the diocese of Sheffield sponsored a visit of four of us from the diocese of Bondo to Sheffield. Following our visit the following areas were discussed and understanding arrived at.

1. Area of mission Boat
2. Mothers Union vehicle to support the coordinator in her work
3. Cathedral building
4. Linkages among churches and schools
5. Rescue Center for the vulnerable groups

Apart from the diocese of Sheffield we also initiated a dialogue with the following:

1. Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren to establish Music training program
2. Ecumenical Council of Churches in Czech Republic for the establishment of Advocacy Center
3. Church in Germany for the establishment of Ludwing Krapf Center for Mission
4. Compassion International for the establishment of Community based compassion centers in Mahaya, Nyagoko, Lweya, Nyaguda, Ranalo and Mageta
5. Global Orphan Relief

Our main desire is to initiate partnerships with as many churches and organizations as possible. We also intend to explore local partnerships as well. I wish to express our gratitude to Rev. Canon Dr. George Okusi who has consistently raised funds to support Bishop Okullu College together with Canon Bill Schrull who has invested a lot in the College IT program.

It is our policy to encourage exposure and those willing to work in other dioceses especially outside Africa are equally encouraged.

## **6. ACK Bondo Diaspora**

As we move into a new chapter of our history, it is imperative to recognize the role our Christians in Diaspora have played over the years. Their contribution towards the purchase of our pastoral vehicle, Synod Plaza and support to our clergy during Covid-19 cannot be understated. Under the leadership of George Magomba, Dan Orenge, Dr. Dan Oyuga, Very Rev. Evans Omollo, the Diaspora has been instrumental in the life of our growth as a diocese. I wish to propose that the Diaspora is elevated to the status of a parish with specific areas of focus. **Parishes** should commence a gradual process of creating a register of their members both resident and in the diaspora. This will enable the Vicars to appropriately plan outreaches to areas with low enrollment as well as visitations to members' homes for spiritual support. It will also help in planning for resource mobilization for Church activities.

## **7. PROPOSED STRATEGIC UNDERTAKINGS**

As we get into a new chapter of our administration, we intend to fasten our resolve and uphold confidence in the Lord who has bestowed upon us his grace and mercies to embark on building our diocese not for ourselves but for the Lord's own glory. He has called us for a purpose. There is something we have to do that will transform the landscape of our mission work, spiritual, financial and numerical growth.

## **New Cathedral**

After having done with the Plaza which has now been christened **ACK Trinity Church House**, we trust in God that despite the prevailing economic situation, there is still a greater resolve for us to go extra mile and build for him a sanctuary befitting his glory. I strongly believe that since we have been blessed to do greater things, collectively we are more endowed to do much better. I want this synod to be at the forefront in mobilization of resources for this project. Contribution in kind would be ideal for those who have the opportunity to do so. During our last synod several members made some pledges and I want to say that just a few have so far honoured their pledges. Lets arise above trivialized fear that the economy is so bad that what we have is not enough for the work of God. God is the supreme giver and whatever little our hearts desire to give back as tokens of gratitude is part of our expression of worship. Our target for the forthcoming fundraiser is **Ksh.50M**

## **New partnerships**

As we had stated before, one of our key areas of intervention is to explore possibilities for more partnerships locally and internationally. Such partnerships would come with some prices, privileges as well as challenges. However, the overall results is that our diocese will get new friends that will be willing to walk with us, always benefiting from the richness of such partnerships. It is for this reason that we are reaching out to some churches in Czech Republic, Germany and the US. We want to explore partnership with many organizations dealing with health, climate change, advocacy, peace and Justice, gender and GBV related issues. Our main objective is to stamp our authority in every area thus remaining relevant to our environment.

## **Constitutional review**

As we progress and encounter new challenges, the need to relook at our diocesan constitution for effective application of our aspirations becomes critical. It is for this reason that in March you approved the formation of a committee with the mandate to work on the review of our constitution. We urge all of us to corporate with the committee by forwarding your views accordingly.

## **Tourism venture**

As we network with many people across the global, it is our desire that we start a program that would provide hospitality to foreign visitors at a small fee. There are so many people willing to visit Kenya and we strongly believe that we can provide a network of hospitality to them in a coordinated way.



## **Spirituality, Liturgy and Music**

Growth of a diocese cannot be complete without quality worship. Our main focus is to improve on quality of worship through singing. For this reason, we are looking forward to establishing a music school where choirmasters, keyboard players are trained. We are trying to link up with the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren to establish summer college for this. In this field too, we want to start bible study as a program in this diocese. Our target groups include the lay evangelists, youth, and Sunday school teachers. Biblical knowledge has the potential to build people spiritually. Apart from music and bible study programs, we are also envisaging having annual revival conference for youth, Sunday school, MU, KAMA, laity and clergy. These thematic conferences will help in reviving our spiritual desire for the Lords service as well as for self-edification.

We cannot overemphasize spiritual growth without touching on numerical growth of the church. We need more resources to help us extend our numerical strength. This would require intensive evangelism through door to door, market crusades and charitable services. Organizing mass events that would attract many people are some of the key interventions we can employ. A church must have good numerical growth as a testimony of our evangelistic outreach. Every church and parish must focus on this strategy. We are losing many members to some smaller Pentecostal churches including cultic movements. Bible study and sound teachings will help in Christian nurture and protect our Christians from spiritual predators.

## **Ludwig Krapf Center for Mission**

As a way of entrenching our desire for mission work, we propose to establish Ludwig Krapf Center for Mission as a spring board for reaching out the unreached. The center will be involved in training missionaries for specific tasks.

## **Transition**

As we embark on addressing these missional objectives, we cannot forget to mention the fact that our transition is also coming closer and we must start praying for it. Even though we are still around for a while, it is our desire that some early planning must begin. Planning for motor vehicle replacement and retirement are heavy duties that must require early preparation. It would be a mockery for us to face the reality of our transition unprepared. Our first transition was marked with various limitations that we would not like to be repeated. However, this preparation does not give way for any window for early campaigns.

## **Conclusion**

We have been called to serve at a time like this when extreme bravery is better than silence. Our action in the field of mission must be determined by our willingness to remain faithful to this call. We have no choice but to avail ourselves to be used of God for the purposes of enriching the Christian ministry in our diocese. We want to thank all those who have stood with us for the last few years we have served you. We cannot forget to thank various parishes who have worked so hard to ensure that their allocations are cleared. Those who supported various departments to remain a going concern, we are together in praising the Lord. There are some of you who from their individual capacity supported us, I wish to extend our gratitude. I can't forget about those who supported us during the construction of the plaza. I want also to thank the members of the executive who are always available for consultation ensuring that consultation is a driving factor in our administration. We want also to say a big thank you to all those who have been on their knees praying for our ministry more so at a time when we are threatened because of our prophetic voice. I want to thank my office staff for their efficient way of carrying out their duties even when I am away. I cannot forget to thank my family, led by my dear wife Mama Janepher for standing with me all the times to a point that they risk their lives because of my ministry. May God bless all of you as you take your rightful position in the service field.