

Message of good wishes from the Diocese of Masasi to our partners in Christ at General Synod, 2007.

Your Grace, my fellow bishops, General Synod members, distinguished guests,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I bring you greetings from the Diocese of Masasi; I take this opportunity to express many thanks to the Primate, who gave me the invitation to attend General Synod, thank you very much. The Diocese of Masasi wishes you peace, hope, unity and success during the time of these General Synod discussions.

During the second half of the 19th century, a number of missionary societies from the West made their appearance in Africa to preach the Gospel. Masasi Diocese which is one diocese in the Anglican Church of Tanzania, was formed out of the original Diocese of Zanzibar in 1926, although Christians had been there ever since 1876. From that small beginning, the Christian faith gradually spread out to the neighbouring people of the area. Faithful missionaries, both African and European, preached the good news and gave their lives to serve the people.

The Diocese of Masasi is located in the Southern part of Tanzania, and covers 68,000 sq. metres, bordered by Mozambique to the South and the Indian Ocean to the East. We have 54 priests, 43 parishes, and 13 deaneries. This part of Tanzania is isolated from the rest of the country, especially in the rainy season, when the only roads in are impassable. We get very little rainfall and the harvest often fails, leaving the people with little to eat and little money to pay for school and hospital fees.

The main cash crop is cashew nuts, these trees are grown everywhere along with mangoes and coconut. The staple diet is maize, rice and cassava.

The Diocese of Masasi expresses many thanks to the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund and all people who support the development work of the dioceses, especially livestock raising and fish farming; water supply and sanitation; relief and rehabilitation, poverty reduction through giving the people cows to pass on. This is because we don't want to give fish but teach them how to fish. We will need your continuous prayers to enable us to move forward.

Also thanks to the Partnership department and PWRDF for bringing me to study at the College of Emmanuel and St. Chad and cover all my costs.

We know that this is a very difficult and critical time when the church will discuss various important matters. It is our hope that this General Synod will help to bring the people of God together and build the church of God worldwide.

I remember with gratitude that the missionaries went to Africa to preach the gospel. They taught the Bible. They then started to teach Bible knowledge in schools and churches, they opened Bible schools and today the church in Africa is growing. This is the response of the developing world to the good foundation laid by our Western missionaries. We also need to remember that when the missionaries went to Africa in the 19th century, they experienced the perils of tribal and ethnic divisions aggravated by the widespread slave trade which was mercifully coming to an end. The missionaries presented a unified message to the indigenous community in keeping with the Gospel of John 17:21: "That they may all be one, Father. May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me". This is the message that the Diocese of Masasi brings to you. Whatever the church discusses, may it be remembered that we should all be one. The indigenous African community accepted the Gospel message with a desire to build unity and preach in the church of God worldwide. We are all sinners, we all need God's forgiveness, we all need to pray for each other so that God who is merciful may manifest His wisdom to us and lead us to the truth of the biblical understanding and teaching, so that we can continue to preach the Gospel as we journey together.

Let us pray,

Merciful God, bless this General Synod. Give the church courage, hope, and peace during these discussions and so, build your church worldwide. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bishop Patrick Mwachiko, Diocese of Masasi, Tanzania.