

THE CHARGE TO SYNOD 2026

Theme: Growing Deep • Reaching Wide

Rooted in Christ. Faithful to the Gospel. Sent to the Nations

Colossians 2:6–7

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him."

1. Opening and Greetings

Beloved in Christ. Nginyanibingelela egameni eliyigugu leNkosi yethu noMsindisi wethu, uJesu Kristu. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.¹

It is once again a great joy and privilege to welcome you to the Synod of REACH South Africa. Synod allows us to worship together, to listen to one another, to deliberate about matters concerning our denomination, and above all, to seek the mind of Christ for His Church.

As we begin, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Christ Church Umhlanga for hosting this year's Synod. To Rev. Nigel Richardson, the Church Council, staff and congregation, we are deeply grateful for your warm hospitality, your partnership in the gospel, and the generous spirit with which you have welcomed us and prepared for our time together. We do not take for granted the considerable work that goes into hosting a gathering such as this, and we thank the Lord for your willingness to serve us in this way.

A special welcome also to our guests who have joined us for this Synod. Your presence enriches our fellowship, and we are grateful that you have taken the time to share these important days with us.

To our delegates, bishops, clergy, ministry workers and lay leaders, thank you for your faithfulness to the Lord's call and for the many ways in which you continue to serve Christ and His people. Some of you have travelled considerable distances to be here. Your presence reminds us that, though we serve in different churches and parts of our country and beyond in Southern Africa, we belong to one body, share one gospel, and have one mission.²

¹ Phil. 1:2.

² Eph. 4:4–6.

Above all, we give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is because of His grace, His death and His resurrection that we belong to Him and to one another as members of His body, the Church.³ We also thank God for His faithfulness to us over this past year. Through encouragements and disappointments, through challenges and joys, the Lord has remained faithful. He has sustained His Church, and He has sustained us.⁴

As I have travelled among our churches, I have been reminded once again that the Lord is at work among us. There are difficulties, certainly. Some churches carry significant financial burdens. Pastors serve under considerable pressure. There are communities facing unemployment, crime, family breakdown and social instability. Yet wonderful testimonies of God's grace also exist. The gospel is being preached. People are coming to Christ. Young people are being disciplined. Churches are being strengthened. Men and women are offering themselves for gospel ministry.

We therefore come to this Synod neither with despair nor with complacency. We come with gratitude for what God has done, but also with faith for what He may yet do among us.

The gospel remains "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."⁵ Our circumstances may change. South Africa may change. The culture around us may change. But the gospel of Jesus Christ has not changed, and our calling to proclaim Christ has not changed.⁶

This brings me to our theme for this year's Synod:

Growing Deep • Reaching Wide

Our calling is simple but demanding: to grow deep in Christ and to reach wide with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

These two things belong together. We cannot reach wide faithfully unless we are growing deep. And if we are truly growing deep in Christ, we cannot remain inward-looking. Deep roots must eventually produce fruit.⁷

³ 1 Cor. 12:12–13; Col. 1:18.

⁴ Lam. 3:22–23.

⁵ Rom. 1:16.

⁶ Heb. 13:8; 2 Tim. 4:1–2.

⁷ Col. 2:6–7; John 15:5, 8

2 Rooted in Christ

Paul writes to the Colossians:

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”⁸

Over the course of this Synod, we are privileged to have our brother Rev Dr Mervyn Eloff open the Word of God for us (Colossians 2:6-7, Romans 12:1-2, and Matthew 28: 16-20). I do not want to take away from what he is teaching us from God’s Word. But I do want to highlight something from Colossians that has particularly been on my heart as I have thought and prayed about our denomination.

Paul’s words in verses 6 and 7 stand at the heart of his message to the Colossians. They had received the gospel through Epaphras, a faithful minister of Christ.⁹ But this young church was now facing pressures that threatened to draw it away from the gospel it had received. Paul therefore calls them back to Christ: “Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him.”¹⁰

In other words, the Christ with whom you began is the Christ in whom you must continue. The gospel that saved you is the gospel in which you must grow.¹¹

That is why Paul uses these two wonderful pictures: “rooted” and “built up” in Christ.¹² One comes from agriculture and the other from construction, but both communicate the same thing: stability, depth, and firmness. Our roots must go deeper into Christ, and our lives and churches must keep being built on Him.

Why does this matter? Because only a few verses later, Paul warns them, “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.”¹³ Other voices, other traditions, and other claims competed for their allegiance.¹⁴ The danger was that they would make secondary things primary and slowly move away from Christ.

Brothers and sisters, that danger remains with us. Every generation of the Church faces voices telling us, in one way or another, that Christ is not enough. Sometimes it is culture. Sometimes politics. Sometimes, race or ethnicity. Sometimes our traditions. And sometimes even our structures and strategies can become more important to us than the Christ they are meant to serve.

⁸ Col. 2:6–7.

⁹ Col. 1:7–8.

¹⁰ Col. 2:6.

¹¹ Col. 1:23; 2:6–7.

¹² Col. 2:7.

¹³ Col. 2:8.

¹⁴ Col. 2:8, 16–23.

Paul's answer is not that we need something more than Christ. We need to go deeper into Christ. For in Christ "all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form," and in Christ we have been brought to fullness.¹⁵

That is what is on my heart for REACH South Africa.

Before we ask how we can grow numerically, plant more churches, strengthen our structures, raise more money or extend our ministry, we need to ask: Are we growing deeper in Christ?

Are we deep in His Word?¹⁶ Are we deep in prayer?¹⁷ Are we growing in holiness?¹⁸ Are our clergy, our families and our churches increasingly finding their identity and confidence in Jesus Christ?

Because only a Church that is deeply rooted in Christ will be able to withstand the pressures around us, and only a Church that is growing deep will be able to reach wide faithfully.

3. Our Gospel Legacy and Our Responsibility

Brothers and sisters, we have inherited a wonderful gospel legacy. Beginning with the work of Christ on the cross, through his apostles, and in our times. Recently, I have been reading J. C. Ryle's *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots*. As I have read it, a few things have stood out to me, particularly as I have reflected on our own gospel heritage as REACH South Africa and the kind of Church we want to be for the next generation.

Ryle reminds us of the great evangelical Anglican tradition shaped by the Reformation. It is a heritage that recovered the Bible for ordinary people and reaffirmed the great doctrines of grace expressed in our Thirty-Nine Articles. Ryle himself speaks gratefully of "*a free Bible and the principles of the Reformation*," while J. I. Packer describes Ryle as one who upheld the Reformation doctrine of grace expressed in the Thirty-Nine Articles.¹⁹

But what has particularly struck me is that, for Ryle, our evangelical heritage was never simply about having the right doctrine. It was about Christ. Ryle writes *that "Christ is the mainspring both of doctrinal and practical Christianity."*²⁰

I find that language particularly helpful in light of our theme. If we are going to be rooted in Christ, then Christ must remain at the centre not only of what we believe and preach, but also of how we live.

¹⁵ Col. 2:9–10.

¹⁶ Col. 3:16.

¹⁷ Col. 4:2.

¹⁸ Col. 3:5–14.

¹⁹ J. C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots*, pref. J. I. Packer (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1979), 292; J. I. Packer, preface to *Holiness*, by J. C. Ryle (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1979), ix.

²⁰ Ryle, *Holiness*, 300.

A second thing that has struck me is Ryle's insistence that sound doctrine must produce a holy life. He warns that "*sound Protestant and evangelical doctrine is useless if it is not accompanied by a holy life.*"²¹

That is a searching word for us. We rightly value our Reformed, Evangelical and Anglican identity. We treasure the Thirty-Nine Articles and our commitment to the authority of Scripture. But it is possible to defend an evangelical heritage without actually living an evangelical life. Our doctrine must be seen in our lives.

This is perhaps the third thing that has stood out to me. Ryle's holiness is deeply practical. It reaches into our homes, our marriages, our relationships, our speech and our ordinary conduct.²²

He also speaks powerfully about what he calls "private religion." He writes that "*private religion must receive our first attention, if we wish our souls to grow.*"²³ He is speaking about things nobody else necessarily sees: private prayer, reading Scripture, communion with Christ, and walking with God at home. Elsewhere he describes this private life with God as "*the root of all vital Christianity.*"²⁴

Perhaps this is where growing deep must begin. Before our public ministry, there must be a private walk with God. Before we ask whether our churches are growing, we must ask whether we are growing. Before we call our people to holiness, we must ask whether we are pursuing holiness ourselves.

This gospel legacy is worth preserving. But we honour it best not simply by remembering names such as Ryle. We honour it by sharing that same confidence in Scripture, that determination to preach Christ, and that conviction that the gospel must transform the lives of those who believe it.

And this gospel inheritance was never intended to be preserved. We must entrust what we have received to faithful people who will also teach others.²⁵

And when we speak about our own history as REACH South Africa, we should remember that our gospel roots are closely connected to this evangelical movement. The evangelical revival did not keep the gospel within the borders of Britain. It produced a strong missionary impulse, and through that wider evangelical missionary movement, the particular stream of Anglican evangelicalism from which REACH South Africa emerged eventually took root here in Southern Africa.²⁶

²¹ Ryle, *Holiness*, xvii.

²² Ryle, *Holiness*, xx.

²³ Ryle, *Holiness*, 89.

²⁴ Ryle, *Holiness*, 295–96; see also xiv.

²⁵ 2 Tim. 2:2.

²⁶ I want to be careful in how I say that. I am not suggesting that Christianity first came to Africa through this movement. The Christian faith has a long and rich history on this continent stretching back to the earliest centuries of the Church. I am speaking specifically about our story, our REACH-SA heritage.

We are the beneficiaries of men and women who believed that the gospel they had received had to be carried beyond themselves. They crossed borders and cultures because they believed that Jesus Christ is Lord and that His gospel is for all nations.²⁷

And now, in the providence of God, we find ourselves at a remarkable moment. The centre of global Christianity has increasingly shifted towards Africa and the wider Global South.

That places a great responsibility upon us. There was a time when churches such as ours were largely on the receiving end of missionary endeavour, theological education and Christian resources from Europe and elsewhere. We remain deeply grateful for that gospel inheritance. But we cannot remain simply receivers of what others have handed to us.

The gospel brought to us must now increasingly be carried by us in a way that speaks to African realities.

This reminds me of the title of Anthony Ive's history of our denomination, *The Candle Burns in Africa*. It is a wonderful image of the gospel flame that was entrusted to those who came before us and that, by God's grace, continues to burn.

But perhaps the question for our generation is not simply whether the candle still burns. What will we do with the flame that has been entrusted to us? Will we preserve it, or will we carry it forward?

We must remain rooted in Scripture and committed to the historic gospel of Jesus Christ. *But we must also carry that gospel into our communities, our cities, our universities, our townships, our rural communities and beyond our borders.*²⁸

The gospel legacy we have received now becomes the gospel responsibility we must carry. *Growing deep must lead to reaching wide.*

4. Reaching Wide: Church Growth and Revitalisation

This brings me to the future of our churches. At our Leaders' Retreat in May, we spent considerable time thinking and praying about the future of REACH South Africa. One priority that emerged clearly was church growth and revitalisation. We remain committed to planting churches where there are gospel opportunities, but we must also give deliberate attention to congregations that need strengthening and revitalisation.

Our Vision Remains:

"To see REACH South Africa grow and flourish among all the people of South Africa, irrespective of age, ethnicity or social status."

²⁷ Matt. 28:18–20

²⁸ Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:8.

We want to see churches planted, struggling churches revitalised and existing churches strengthened. We want to take the gospel into communities where we presently have little or no witness.²⁹

But growth cannot simply mean numbers. Healthy growth includes conversion, biblical maturity, discipleship, evangelism, prayer and pastoral care.³⁰

And we will not all contribute in the same way. Some churches will plant. Others will revitalise. Some stronger churches will partner with smaller and struggling churches. Some will send people. Others will give resources. But all of us have a part to play in the same gospel mission.³¹

I particularly want us to think about the next generation and the communities we may too easily overlook.

We must reach children, teenagers, university students and young adults. We must equip parents to disciple their children.³² And we must create pathways for young men and women to explore Christian ministry.

But as we think about reaching widely, I also want us to remember our rural communities.

One thing that struck me as I reflected on our history is how significant rural and indigenous congregations once were in our denomination's life. In 1940, for example, the records show 135 Indigenous churches compared with only 12 European and "Coloured" churches. The Church of England Zulu Missions in Natal alone included 57 churches and 17 mission stations, while the African Church had a substantial presence in the Transvaal and Orange Free State.³³

That history should prompt important questions about what has happened to those churches, and where we are planting and revitalising churches today.

As South Africa has urbanised, it is understandable that much of our attention has shifted to cities and growing urban centres. We must keep reaching those places. But we must not allow reaching the cities to mean forgetting the rural communities from which so much of our own history comes.

Many people still live in villages, small towns, farming communities, and other rural parts of our country who need faithful churches, well-trained pastors, and the regular preaching of God's Word. They matter to God, and therefore they must matter to us.³⁴

²⁹ Rom. 15:20.

³⁰ Acts 2:42–47; Eph. 4:11–16.

³¹ 1 Cor. 12:4–7.

³² Deut. 6:6–7; Eph. 6:4.

³³ Daluxolo Mbebe, *A Historical-Critical Analysis of the Phenomenon of Ecclesial Racial Differentiation within the Church of England in South Africa (1806–1994)* (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2025), 184–85.

³⁴ The World Bank estimates about 36.18%. See

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=ZA> (accessed 3 September 2026).

So when we speak about church planting and church revitalisation, I want us to think about both our growing cities and our rural communities. In some places, the need will be to plant something new. In others, the greater opportunity may be to return to places where REACH South Africa has historic roots and ask whether existing churches can be strengthened, revitalised, and equipped for a new generation.

Our question should not simply be, “Where is it easiest for us to grow?” We should also be asking, *“Where are the people who need to hear the gospel, and where are the churches that need to be strengthened?”*

Jesus looked at the crowds and had compassion on them because they were “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” He then said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”³⁵

That harvest includes our cities. It includes our young people. And it includes the villages, small towns and rural communities of South Africa. If we are serious about reaching widely, we must not forget them.

5. Theological Education and the Future of REACH-SA

If we are serious about reaching the next generation, we must be equally serious about preparing those who will lead, teach and shepherd it. Leadership development begins with identifying those whom God is raising up, providing sound theological education, practical ministry experience, and intentional mentoring.

Our vision for theological education is to form the head, heart and hands. Leaders must be grounded in Scripture and doctrine, shaped in Christian character, and equipped for gospel ministry.

In this regard, George Whitefield College remains central to our mission. GWC is our theological college, entrusted with preparing men and women for faithful Christian service. We should take ownership of the College by praying for it, supporting it, engaging with it, and helping to strengthen it where needed.

As both Presiding Bishop and Chancellor of GWC, I am convinced that the College has a vital role to play in the future of REACH-SA and the wider African Church. Increasingly, leaders across the GAFCON movement recognise GWC as an important centre for evangelical theological education. We should thank God for this gift and steward it well.

This partnership is especially important as GWC enters a significant season of transition with the appointment of a new Principal. Please pray for wisdom, discernment and God's provision of the right leader to guide the College into its next chapter.

³⁵ Matt. 9:36–37.

Taking ownership also means investing in future leaders. I encourage every REACH-SA church to continue supporting the REACH-SA Training Fund, particularly through the Good Friday offering. Such generosity is an investment in the future of gospel ministry.

The training of future leaders belongs to all of us. We must identify, mentor and support those whom God is calling into ministry. If we want REACH-SA to grow deep and reach wide, we must invest now in those who will proclaim Christ, plant churches, disciple believers and lead the Church in the generation to come.

Let us commit ourselves afresh to raising leaders, strengthening theological formation, supporting George Whitefield College, and investing sacrificially in the future of gospel ministry.

6. Caring for Those Who Serve

As we think about raising future leaders, we must also care for those who are already serving. Another priority that emerged clearly at our Leaders' Retreat was pastoral care.

Ministry is a wonderful privilege, but it can also be lonely and exhausting. Many of our clergy carry burdens their congregations never see. Some serve under severe financial pressure. Others face difficult pastoral situations. Some are tired or discouraged. Ministry families often make enormous sacrifices for the gospel.

Those who spend their lives caring for God's people also need care.³⁶ As Bishops and Bishops' chaplains, we need to work hard to get to know the clergy. Clergy must care for one another. Church councils must care for their pastors and their families.³⁷

And where someone is struggling, we must learn to come alongside them. A healthy denomination is not simply one whose structures function well. It is one in which its people, including its leaders, are being strengthened in Christ.

7. The Simunye Fund and Our Shared Responsibility

That care for one another also has a financial dimension. Last year, Synod agreed to increase our levies by one percentage point to support struggling churches.

I need to acknowledge that I did not provide sufficient clarity about how this additional one per cent was to be handled.

At one stage, I encouraged churches to support struggling churches directly. While I remain encouraged when churches voluntarily support one another, I have subsequently been reminded, particularly by our brothers and sisters in the

³⁶ Gal. 6:2; 1 Thess. 5:11.

³⁷ 1 Tim. 5:17–18.

Western Cape, that this was not the mechanism envisaged by the Synod resolution. I accept that correction.

Where Synod has made a decision, we need to honour both its intention and the agreed process.

I want to encourage churches that have started giving their additional one per cent to continue, and once the Simunye Fund starts operating with the Executive, a clear structure will be established for administering and distributing these funds. And for those who are paying it directly to the Central Office, these funds can be properly identified and ring-fenced.

After Synod, I will meet with the Executive to establish a clear structure for administering and distributing these funds. That structure must include proper accountability and transparent reporting.³⁸

I hope that, as the Simunye Fund becomes fully established, we will have a coherent and transparent way of assisting churches that are struggling financially.

The principle behind Simunye is simple: We are one.³⁹

When one church struggles, it should matter to the rest of us. When God has blessed another congregation with greater resources, that creates an opportunity for gospel partnership.⁴⁰

This is not about creating unhealthy dependence. It is about recognising that we belong to one another. But generosity and accountability must go together.

Churches must know how funds are being used. Those entrusted with distributing them must exercise wisdom, fairness and transparency. And we must report clearly on how these resources are strengthening gospel ministry.

We also need to think strategically about the properties God has entrusted to REACH-SA. Some of our assets may be underutilised, and Bishop Martin, Jonathan, Major and Simba are already exploring responsible ways to determine whether we can develop them in ways that create sustainable value for gospel ministry. Our resources and structures are serving the gospel.

8. Identity, Governance and Structures

This brings us naturally to governance. As REACH South Africa moves forward, we need clarity about who we are, who is responsible for what, and how decisions are made.

³⁸ 2 Cor. 8:20–21.

³⁹ 1 Cor. 12:12–27.

⁴⁰ 2 Cor. 8:13–15.

Good governance is not opposed to gospel ministry. Good governance serves and protects gospel ministry.⁴¹

At our Leaders' Retreat, we recognised the importance of strengthening accountability, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and ensuring that our decision-making processes are understood.

But structures are servants, not masters. We should keep asking: Does this help us proclaim Christ? Does this help us make disciples? Does this strengthen our mission?

Where structures help us fulfil that mission, we should strengthen them. Where they have become unnecessarily burdensome, we should have the courage to examine them.

And through it all, we must remain clear about our identity. We are REACH South Africa. We are Reformed, Evangelical and Anglican. We must know who we are if we are going to know where we are going.

9. Human Dignity, Immigration and Christian Witness

War and conflict continue to bring suffering, displacement and fear to millions across our world. As Christians, we are called not to respond with despair or indifference, but to be people of peace, prayer and reconciliation. We must pray for those who suffer, speak courageously against injustice and violence, welcome the displaced, and work for reconciliation wherever God has placed us. Above all, we proclaim Christ, the Prince of Peace, whose gospel calls us to love our enemies, pursue peace and bear witness to the hope of God's coming kingdom.

Closer to home, South Africa continues to face profound social and economic challenges. Unemployment remains devastating for many families—crime and violence cause enormous suffering. Communities are frustrated by failures in public services and governance.

Questions concerning immigration, borders, public resources and public safety are real. Christians have every right to participate in these conversations.

But we must participate as Christians. The Bible begins our thinking about human dignity not with nationality, ethnicity or citizenship, but with creation. Every human being bears the image of God.⁴²

Therefore, legitimate concern must never become hatred. Frustration must never become violence. Political disagreement must never remove human dignity.

Immigration laws matter. Border management matters. The government has a responsibility to govern justly and effectively.⁴³ But the foreigner is still our

⁴¹ 1 Cor. 14:40.

⁴² Gen. 1:26–27.

⁴³ Rom. 13:1–7.

neighbour.⁴⁴ And in many of our churches, the foreigner is our brother or sister in Christ.⁴⁵

We must reject xenophobia wherever it appears. We must resist blaming entire groups of vulnerable people for complex national problems.

We need to participate actively in joining with others, especially through platforms such as the Evangelical Alliance of Southern Africa and organisations such as FOR SA, to encourage meaningful solutions.

The Church must hold truth and compassion together. We must protect human dignity, pursue justice, promote reconciliation and model responsible citizenship.⁴⁶

In an increasingly angry society, may our churches be communities where truth is spoken in love.⁴⁷ Disagreement does not lead to dehumanisation, and strangers are received with Christian compassion.

10. Corruption in Governmental Structures

Many of us are deeply disheartened by the ongoing revelations emerging from the Madlanga Commission. The testimonies detailing systemic corruption and political interference within our justice system are sobering, and such widespread abuses of power can breed cynicism and despair among our people.

Yet, as a Church rooted in Christ, we must not yield to hopelessness.

We are called to look to the Lord, the righteous Judge, who alone promises the ultimate renewal of all things.⁴⁸ While we wait for that day, we cannot remain silent or passive in the present age. We must actively advocate for justice, calling for perpetrators to be held accountable and demanding honesty and transparency in our public service.⁴⁹

Our gospel convictions must tangibly shape our public life. We must join the chorus of those who have had enough of corruption, whether they be in civil society or ecumenical circles. We must intentionally train and support Christians to be ethical in their workplaces, especially those who are entrusted with the stewardship of state resources.⁵⁰

As a counter-cultural community, we must refuse to accept vices such as bribery, the flouting of due process, favouritism, and dishonesty as normal and acceptable aspects of our culture. Scripture is clear: *"Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent"* (Exodus 23:8).

⁴⁴ Lev. 19:33–34.

⁴⁵ Eph. 2:19.

⁴⁶ Mic. 6:8.

⁴⁷ Eph. 4:15.

⁴⁸ 2 Pet. 3:13.

⁴⁹ Am. 5:24.

⁵⁰ Lk. 16:10.

Instead, we are called to demonstrate a better way through our own conduct,⁵¹ continually pointing to the transformative power of the gospel in our preaching. True gospel growth means that our faith must penetrate the public square, offering a bright witness of integrity in a fractured world.

11. From South Africa to the Nations

Our vision must also extend beyond ourselves. REACH South Africa belongs to a much larger fellowship of confessing Anglicans through GAFCON. We stand alongside brothers and sisters around the world who share our commitment to the authority of Scripture, the biblical gospel and the mission of Christ.

As I said earlier, the centre of global Christianity has increasingly shifted towards Africa and the wider Global South. That is not simply something to celebrate. It brings responsibility. The African Church must increasingly be willing not only to receive, but to send, teach, give and lead. REACH South Africa must play its part.

Global mission begins locally, in our homes, neighbourhoods and churches, but it must not end there.⁵²

Let us raise missionaries. Let us plant churches. Let us train gospel workers. Let us send men and women across cultural and national boundaries. Let us strengthen partnerships across Africa and throughout the global Church.

Our Lord's commission remains before us: "Go and make disciples of all nations."⁵³ Friends, let us let that candle continue to burn in Africa. Let us carry the light of Christ faithfully.⁵⁴

12. Our Priorities Going Forward

Brothers and sisters, our discussions at the Leaders' Retreat have helped us identify several priorities for the coming years.

We want a Central Office that serves our churches effectively and communicates clearly. I am grateful that we now have a full complement of staff and that our communication has strengthened. We should also recognise that several team members are relatively new, and extend patience and encouragement as they settle into their responsibilities.

We want healthy churches, including new church plants and revitalised congregations. We want greater clarity around our identity, governance and accountability.

⁵¹ Phil. 2:15.

⁵² Acts 1:8.

⁵³ Matt. 28:19.

⁵⁴ Matt. 5:14–16.

We want stronger pastoral care for clergy, ministry workers and their families. We want the Simunye Fund to become an effective and transparent means of strengthening ministries with fewer resources. And we want renewed commitment to leadership development and theological training.

These are not unrelated projects. They give our theme practical expression. Growing deep means leaders and churches rooted in Christ and His Word.

Reaching wide means taking that gospel into our communities, raising new leaders, planting and revitalising churches, and crossing boundaries with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Our ambition is not simply to become a larger denomination. I pray that we will become a healthier, stronger and more faithful denomination, deeply rooted in Christ and increasingly equipped for His mission.

A CHARGE TO THE CHURCH

And so, beloved, I charge this Synod:

Grow deep in Christ: Let the Word of Christ dwell richly among us.⁵⁵ Be devoted to prayer.⁵⁶ Pursue holiness.⁵⁷ Guard the gospel entrusted to us.⁵⁸

Reach wide with the gospel: Evangelise. Plant churches. Revitalise struggling congregations. Reach children and young people. Cross cultural, economic and geographical boundaries with the good news of Jesus Christ.⁵⁹

Raise the next generation: Identify leaders. Mentor them. Train them. Give them opportunities. Support theological education and entrust the gospel to faithful people who will teach others also.⁶⁰

Care for one another.

Care for our pastors and their families. Care for struggling churches. Let the stronger help the weaker. Let generosity increasingly mark our life together.⁶¹

Steward faithfully.

Handle money transparently. Use our properties wisely. Let our structures and resources serve the mission Christ has given us.⁶²

Bear faithful witness in our nation.

⁵⁵ Col. 3:16.

⁵⁶ Col. 4:2.

⁵⁷ Heb. 12:14.

⁵⁸ 2 Tim. 1:13–14.

⁵⁹ Matt. 28:18–20.

⁶⁰ 2 Tim. 2:2.

⁶¹ Gal. 6:2.

⁶² 1 Cor. 4:2.

Defend human dignity. Reject racism, xenophobia and corruption. Pursue justice. Love the stranger. Speak the truth in love.⁶³

And above all:

Keep Christ at the centre.

We can have good strategies, better structures, more resources and even more churches, and still lose our way if Christ is no longer our first love.⁶⁴

Therefore: “Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him.”⁶⁵ Rooted in Him. Built up in Him. Established in the faith. Overflowing with thankfulness.⁶⁶

Appreciation and Conclusion

Before I conclude, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all who continue to labour faithfully for Christ and His Church.

To our Area Bishops, clergy, ministry workers and their families, thank you.

To our church councils and lay leaders, thank you.

To our National Executive, Trustees, Chancellor and Central Office staff, thank you for your service and stewardship.

To those churches that continue to give generously towards theological training, struggling congregations and gospel partnership, thank you.

And to those who serve quietly and faithfully, often without recognition, remember that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.⁶⁷ God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have served His people.⁶⁸

To all the delegates gathered at this Synod, ngiyanibonga nonke.

Brothers and sisters, there is much work before us. Some of our challenges are significant. We will not solve them all at this Synod, nor will we always agree about the best way forward.

But we know whose Church this is.

Jesus said: *“I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”*⁶⁹ So let us not lose heart.⁷⁰

Let us not become distracted by lesser things. Let us grow deep. Let us reach wide.

⁶³ Gen. 1:27; Lev. 19:33–34; Eph. 4:15.

⁶⁴ Rev. 2:4–5.

⁶⁵ Col. 2:6.

⁶⁶ Col. 2:7.

⁶⁷ 1 Cor. 15:58.

⁶⁸ Heb. 6:10.

⁶⁹ Matt. 16:18.

⁷⁰ 2 Cor. 4:16.

May the Lord make REACH South Africa a Church deeply rooted in Christ, faithful to His Word, devoted to prayer, growing in holiness and passionate about reaching the lost. May He strengthen our churches and revive those that are struggling. May He raise a new generation of faithful gospel workers. May He make us generous with everything He has entrusted to us. And may He use us in this generation to carry the light of Christ throughout South Africa, across Southern Africa and across our continent and to the nations.

“To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.”⁷¹

⁷¹ Eph. 3:21.