

A Greeting from Bishop Paul Korir, Bishop of Kapsabet for the June 2020 Meeting of the Coventry Diocesan Synod

Dear Lord Bishop Dr. Christopher and the good people of the diocese of Coventry

The Church: The Beacon of Hope in the Context of Covid-19

Greetings to you all and abounding grace from your brothers and sisters of the diocese of Kapsabet! We trust that it is well with your soul and the Lord has favored you in good times and in challenging times as these!

As you meet as a diocesan family, we are cognizant to the fact that your diocesan synod comes at such a time as this when the world is experiencing and feeling the effects and impact of covid-19! We bless the Lord that technology is here with us and the new normal now and the way to do ministry is to do it virtually through zooming and other appropriate and innovative methodologies enhanced and advanced by the social media.

Allow us bishop chair and the leadership of your synod to join you to most sincerely thank the clergy and lay leadership of the church for their resilience, commitment, creativity, sacrifices, flexibility and their obedience to their higher calling that have been demonstrated crystal clear in their ensuring that the ministry landscape and the presence of the church remain consistent and adaptive in the face of shifting realities and complex challenges posed by the covid-19 global pandemic. We appreciate you: we thank God for you: we are proud of you!

For example, generally in Kenya and in our diocese in particular, church buildings have remained closed since mid-March 2020 but the church has shifted strongly to the family altar. Families meet to worship together every Sunday as they follow a format of worship that was developed and crafted from the Book of Common Prayer to suit the family service while upholding the liturgical uniqueness of the Anglican church. It has not been easy to lead services in our home church and it is more so because we are mostly an oral culture but talents have been identified and raised from this home church for which we bless the Lord. Clergy and Lay Readers pre-record their weekly sermons to be send through whatsapp to those Christians who are blessed to have the smartphones which is a small percentage of our Christians but they say, a half a loaf is better than none! I for one have witnessed creativity and innovation of our clergy and lay leadership in ways I had never thought or imagined! Thanks be to God!

This covid-19 pandemic ministry context has challenged and encouraged us at the same time to generate new ideas on how to do ministry and on how to be church for relevancy and impact. Besides pastoral care and outreach, we have embarked on the ambitious program of localizing the WHO's protocols and government's directives for our community which is mostly rural for their internalization and action. In our context, covid-19 pandemic is mostly perceived as a disease for urban centers and cities and better still, a disease for the elites of the society and for that most of the rural folks treat the protocols as alien and foreign. In translating the protocols to the local

language, Nandi/Kalenjin, we anticipate to enhance awareness creation and in the long run, many lives will be saved from this scourge.

Hand washing with clean water and soap being advanced as the most effective method in the fight against the pandemic calls for the church to walk with many families who cannot afford to purchase water tanks/jerry cans but we thank God in that our diocese has been able to support 230 families with each a 50 liter jerry can and bar soaps to mitigate the challenge. We have also distributed face masks to the very less fortunate families for which we thank God. In all this, we have adopted the clarion that goes, living one day at a time.

We are equally readying ourselves for the reopening of the places of worship in the near future and every clergy is encouraged to establish a protocol committee right from the local churches to the parish level whose responsibility is to ensure that the Christians adhere to the protocols to the letter for the safety and lives of our people is a priority. The government of Kenya has established an inter-faith council whose mandate is to recommend of the practical ways and steps for the reopening of places of worship. People are so looking forward to the reopening of churches and for that we better get prepared and ready both in prayer and practically.

We share the ministry in our context with you to encourage all of us and to show us that the church of Christ is alive and well even under such tough times of covid-19. He who called us at such a time as this is faithful (**Esther 4:14b**,... *and who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?*)

Well, good people and our friends and gospel partners, we wish you Godspeed as you deliberate on the motions in your order paper to generate resolutions that will accelerate your ministry in your context and facilitate our shared ministry across the world. Be strong and be encouraged as we agree with St. Paul in **2 Corinthians 4:7**, who advances that, *but we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*

Let us keep pressing on for our joy is that our names are written in heaven (**Luke 10:20**).

We thank God for our partnership and we pray for you each and everyday that God will bless each one of you and that he may remember the sacrifices you make for his ministry even in hard and tough times as these. May he come through for all of us so that when this covid-19 is over, the church shall come out much more stronger to the glory and honor of his name. Be safe and have fun as you virtually transact the business of your synod!

Faithfully and With Gratitude

The Rt. Rev'd Dr. Paul Korir and the good people of the diocese of Kapsabet
Companion/Link diocese of Coventry