

Statement from the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Thabo Makgoba, on the storms and flooding in Soweto and in KwaZulu Natal

Tuesday 3 March 2009

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba has visited scenes of flooding and death in Soweto, and sent messages of support to areas of KwaZulu Natal where storms have also caused fatalities and destruction. The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, who grew up near the Jukskei River in Alexandra, was shocked at the scale of the damage, and assured those he met of his prayers, and of the support of the Anglican Church, including financial support through its relief and social development organisation, Hope Africa.

The Archbishop spoke of the need for greater sensitivity to the environment, at every level from national government to local community planning, pointing out that many factors from the disappearance of wetlands to the concentrations of urban developments can contribute to greatly increased risks of flooding, even from normal volumes of rainfall. He added that human responsibility – a God-given gift, which we must choose to use wisely – was relevant here too, and not only in the wider problem of global warming and climate change.

In messages to the Bishop of Johannesburg, Brian Germond, and the Bishop of Natal, Rubin Philip, Archbishop Makgoba said: 'On behalf of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, I offer our condolences to those who have lost loved ones. They, and all who have been injured, and who have lost homes and livelihoods through these storms and flooding, are in our hearts, and in our prayers. In the days ahead, may they find comfort and strength in the promise of Jesus that he is with us always, and that nothing, not in life nor in death, can separate us from the love of God.'

The Archbishop added, 'I encourage our churches and parishioners to offer what help they can – remembering the words of Jesus, that we shall all be called to give account of whether we have fed the hungry and cared for the needy.'

He also called on governments and local authorities concerned to take the necessary steps in providing both immediate help and longer term resources for reconstruction, while bearing in mind issues of environmental sensitivity and sustainability. He went on to say 'The whole world must urgently recognise that this is God's creation. We have no other. It is for all of us to treat it with respect, and hold it in trust for the generations that come after us.'

Issued by the Office of the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town
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Note to editors - The Anglican Church of Southern Africa, which Archbishop Makgoba heads, encompasses Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, St Helena, South Africa, Swaziland and Tristan da Cunha.