

***Ungusobaba*¹ [you are our father]:
the life of an Anglican bishop,
Lawrence Bekisisa Zulu (1937-2013+)**

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Abstract

This study seeks to document the role that Lawrence Bekisisa Zulu played in the Anglican Church in South Africa (ACSA), particularly in the dioceses of Zululand and Swaziland, as a bishop. It records the life story of Zulu as a leader whose gifts as a pastor, teacher and priest enriched the lives of many clergy and lay people. That Zulu was entrusted with leadership positions in three dioceses, also suggests the strength of his moral authority and spirituality. The study demonstrates how the context of colonialism and apartheid shaped Zulu's approach to the issues of poverty and human dignity. Zulu's contribution is evident especially in the manner in which he as a community leader tried to enhance social development by fostering the spirit of self-reliance through his pastoral ministry, consequently striving to assert the dignity of humanity.

Introduction

In this article, I will highlight the contribution of Lawrence Bekisisa Zulu, who in 1975 followed Alpheus Zulu to become the second black bishop in the Anglican Diocese of Zululand, and later Bishop of Swaziland in 1993 and then from 2001 to 2005 a caretaker bishop (Vicar General) of Mpumalanga diocese. To do this, I will address the question: What special contribution did Zulu make to the life of the Anglican Church in Southern Africa (ACSA), particularly in Zululand and Swaziland? In response to this question, I will illustrate how his personal life and ministry of 45 years tried to transform the religious and social aspects of the lives of the people in the rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland. I will show that Zulu's early background of poverty later made him sensitive to the situations of people who struggled with similar conditions to those that he grew up in.

Zulu became bishop during the zenith of apartheid years. Hence this article will also seek to illustrate how apartheid legislation directly or indirectly affected his life and ministry. Likewise, leading the diocese during the intense rivalry between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) in the 1980s and 1990s, this article also highlights Zulu's response to apartheid or the issues that emerged in the context of apartheid, such as economic sanctions. Essentially, this article is a life story of Zulu, his background in rural KwaZulu-Natal and his ministry in the Anglican Church.

Methodology

In his book, *The making of an indigenous clergy in Southern Africa*, Philippe Denis drew attention to the insufficient record, mostly by white missionaries, of the life stories and ministry of the African clergy in Southern Africa, which contributed to a lopsided missionary historiography.² In a small way, the present article is an attempt to fill this lacuna. This is the first study of Lawrence Zulu within the broader stream of history of Christianity in ACSA.

To document Zulu's life story, I will use oral historical sources, as well as interviews with Zulu and people who know him well. Most studies use almost exclusively documented sources, thus this article is remarkable in the extent to which it draws on oral history. Jan Vansina³ and Paul Thompson⁴ stressed the value of oral sources in documenting the study of history.

In an attempt to garner relevant information, open-ended questions were put to the interviewees; the thrust of which was: "What, according to your experience or knowledge, did Zulu contribute to the life of the Church in Southern Africa?"

I will also augment oral sources by using documented data from the ACSA Archives at Witwatersrand University and other secondary sources.

¹ Depending on the stress of the intonation, the Zulu word *Ungusobaba* may translate as "He is our father", or "You are our father."

² Denis, P. *The making of an indigenous clergy in Southern Africa: Proceedings of the International Conference*, held at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg 25-27, October 1994: Cluster Publications, 2007.

³ Jan Vansina, *Oral tradition: a study in historical methodology*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965; *Oral History as history*, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Press, 1985.

⁴ Paul Thompson, *The voice of the past, oral history*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Early background

Growing up at KwaMagwaza, Melmoth

Lawrence Bekisisa Zulu of the Ndabezitha clan hailed from KwaMagwaza in Zululand in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. He was born to John and Nellie Zulu on 8 March 1937.⁵ He had a sister, Mavis. Both their parents were Christians in the Anglican Church.

KwaMagwaza was the first mission of the Anglican Church in Zululand. It was founded in September 1860 by Reverend R. Robertson, who was sent by Bishop John Colenso of Natal.⁶ When Zulu was born, the head of the mission at KwaMagwaza was Father Frank Osborne.⁷ However, Zulu was baptised by Father [Frank] Brabant.⁸ Baptised as “Lawrence Bekisisa” he came to be affectionately known as “Lawrence”, subsequently as “Bishop Lawrence”. Zulu was confirmed in May 1950 by Bishop Eric Trapp.

Zulu’s father was a catechist while his mother was a school teacher. Zulu recalled that, for an unknown reason when her mother married his father, she had to give up her teaching job. His father died in 1952.⁹

Zulu’s grandfather on his mother’s side was Mgwadi Dubazana, and his grandmother was maMtimkulu.¹⁰ Zulu remembered that though they were not Christians, his grandfather was “favourably disposed to the Christian faith” and when some of his children became Christians, he made provision for them not to indulge in “heathen” customs.¹¹

In 1938, responding to the Mission’s directive, Zulu’s parents, John and Nellie Zulu, left their ancestral home of KwaMagwaza and started working at St. Francis, Mkhindeni (which no longer exists, the site is only identifiable by the presence of banana trees), where he took over from the catechist who had left the Anglican Church to join the Ethiopian Church.¹² Mkhindeni became the Zulu’s permanent home and young Lawrence started his early education there.

After four years of school at Mkhindeni, Zulu attended the Lutheran School at Makhasaneng for two years, after which he went to KwaMagwaza. He then attended St. Augustine High School, an Anglican School in Nqutu in the vicinity of Isandhlwana, from 1953 to 1956, where he attained his matric.¹³

In 1952, while studying at KwaMagwaza, Zulu confided in fellow pupils about his ambitions. He said, “I want to be better educated so that I can then be employed as a catechist and insist on earning two pounds like my father earned” and his friends laughed and remarked that “It was childish anger.”¹⁴ He felt strongly that his father’s humble education was the reason for his meagre wage and he was therefore determined to acquire a better education and improve his lot. At his tender age, Zulu was critical of the missionaries’ exploitation of his father and wanted to prove that he could attain a better education.¹⁵

Wrestling with vocation

Zulu recalled that around 1945 or 1946 he thought about becoming a medical doctor. However, the thought of touching blood or the prospect of dealing with corpses put him off.¹⁶ Around 1953 or earlier, Zulu was wrestling with the idea of training as a teacher at the Roman Catholic institution of Marian Hill. It was also during this time that he strongly contemplated the ordained ministry, though Zulu seemed to think that this aspect of his vocation probably went further back to his early life.¹⁷ However, for Zulu, the idea of training as a teacher was largely motivated by his father’s plight, especially the humble wages that he was paid. He thought that becoming a teacher would help him to achieve some financial independence so that he could save enough money before finally joining the ministry.¹⁸

In a letter that he wrote to Trapp in 1957 he asked him (the diocese) for a loan to pay for his training as a teacher. Trapp responded to Zulu through Edward Arden, the parish priest at KwaMagwaza Mission, stating that

⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁶ Pascoe, C.F. (1901). *Two hundred years of the SPG: an historical account of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, 1701-1900*. London: SPG, 336-337. Pascoe recorded that the first Zulu priest to be ordained in Zululand was Titus Mthembu in 1894. Mthembu had worked closely as an assistant to Rev. C. Johnson, 341c.

⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁸ Zulu seemed to think that Father Brant’s name was Frank.

⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹⁰ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹² Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

¹⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

¹⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

¹⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹⁸ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

he was hesitant to do so as he did not think that the church would be reimbursed since churches were no longer running schools.¹⁹

Following the implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, church schools were handed over to the government or operated as private institutions.²⁰ Thus this law indirectly affected Zulu's life choices. He wanted to start his career as a teacher before going on to train for the priesthood, but because missions no longer ran schools, Trapp was unwilling to grant a loan to Zulu which he would not be able to repay. In the meantime Thomas Savage became Bishop of Zululand in 1958.

¹⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

²⁰ See Paton, A. *Apartheid and the Archbishop, the life of Geoffrey Clayton*, Cape Town: David Philip, Chapter 27.

Training for the priesthood: “becoming Huddleston boys”

St Peter's Theological College, Johannesburg – 1957-59

Under these circumstances arrangements were made rather hastily for Zulu to go to St. Peter's Theological College in Rosettenville, Johannesburg. He arrived in Johannesburg on 25 January 1957, the Feast of the conversion of St. Paul – and found that the college had started the previous week.²¹ He recalled that at Even Song (Evening Prayer) that day, the Scripture reading was from Jeremiah 1. He felt that the words “never say you are young”²² spoke directly to him as a young ordinand. So too did the words that Arden wrote in his Prayer Book, quoting St. Paul: “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.”²³

Zulu's first year in Johannesburg was difficult. He had arrived in Johannesburg hastily without an apartheid government permit, so he was liable for arrest. Zulu only received the permit sent to him by Arden from Melmoth at the end of 1957. Ironically, he remembered that he had said to his school mates at St. Augustine's in Nqutu in 1956 that “Johannesburg is the last place I will ever set my foot in”.²⁴

The apartheid government Group Areas Act designated different residential and business areas for different races.²⁵ So a black person like Zulu coming to live in a white area needed to carry a government permit. The law virtually turned black South Africans into foreigners in their own land as they needed government permits to live in areas designated for Europeans only.²⁶ Because he did not have a permit, Zulu was advised not to leave the college premises. To have a view of the city, however, he painted the roof of the house during college chores!²⁷

When Zulu started at St. Peter's Theological College, the renowned Father Trevor Huddleston had left the college the previous year. Huddleston was an Anglican priest, subsequently a bishop, who fiercely opposed the racist apartheid policies that discriminated against blacks in the 1950s and early 1960s²⁸. He remembered that “the police were in the habit of calling [us] the students (ordinands) ‘Huddleston boys’”²⁹.

Zulu felt that the training at St. Peter's tried to give students a good academic grounding, spiritual formation through a regular rhythm of prayer life, and pastoral experience in the parishes.³⁰ The emphasis was on the study of Scriptures, teaching of the faith and cultivation and development of habits of prayer. According to Zulu, the training was thorough, academically stimulating and challenging.³¹

The training also sought to integrate theological studies with pastoral and spiritual discipline. Zulu spoke well of the theological teachers and trainers, particularly the principal, Godfrey Pawson, and the outgoing principal, Philip Speight, who taught doctrine.³² Speight's knowledge of his subject was such that he told them the strengths and weaknesses of the authors whose works he prescribed.³³ When Zulu started his training, the principal was Pawson, who was subsequently succeeded by Speight, “a man very slow in speech and very bright”.³⁴

Pastoral care in the neighbouring communities was an important aspect of theological training. On these occasions the students wore college identity cards. Zulu recalled an incident when students who did pastoral work amongst domestic workers working in the white community, were chased away by the police after a homeowner called them.³⁵ The police told the students that “obviously the owner did not like them” and advised them not to return.³⁶

Following this incident, the college staff felt that the visits had to stop as the students were being harassed.³⁷ Yet such experiences, which were common at the time due to the Group Areas Act, gradually sensitized Zulu to the issues of the injustices of apartheid. Perhaps, quietly, Zulu was becoming a “Huddleston boy”. In their second year Zulu and other college mates, notably Philip Mokuku (future Bishop of Lesotho), Siphso Masimela and Bernard Mkhabela (future Bishop of Swaziland), were joined by Desmond Mpilo Tutu. Tutu was married and therefore had the option to study for only two years, yet “in his typical character, he

²¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

²² Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

²³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

²⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

²⁵ See Paton, A. *Apartheid and the Archbishop, the life of Geoffrey Clayton*, Cape Town: David Philip, 1973, 192, 196, 271-3; 287.

²⁶ *Apartheid and the Archbishop...* 271-3

²⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

²⁸ Trevor Huddleston documented his struggles in what is now a classic book, *Naught for Your Comfort*, Fontana, 1958.

²⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

³⁰ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/07/11.

³¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

³² Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

³³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

³⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

³⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

³⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

³⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

insisted on spending three years, like anybody else”.³⁸ Zulu recalled that Tutu was very bright but also humble and never wanted fellow students to discuss his achievements, trying his best to avoid the subject. He reminisced about those times when in the typical spirit of students they would “make noise and have fun”.³⁹ Aelred Stubbs, the former Principle of St. Peter’s College, comparing Lawrence Zulu to Tutu as students at St. Peter’s College, noted that “Lawrence Zulu ... was the original thinker [but] didn’t have the incisiveness or ambition. Desmond had the power of assimilation ... and a real feeling for people and their goodness or otherwise.”⁴⁰ This nature of Zulu was to help him to grapple with challenging theological issues at Cambridge and later in his ministry.

During his last year at college, Pawson said to Zulu, “I can see from the way you quote the Bible in your essays that you don’t really read the Bible. What is the use of the commentary if you don’t quote the Bible properly?”⁴¹ From then on Zulu took the study of Scriptures seriously.

Zulu finished his theological training at the age of 22. Since Church Law only allowed ordination to the diaconate at the age of 23, he worked as a sort of a “lay minister” in the parish of St. Margaret’s, KwaNongoma, in the interim.⁴²

The rule would not however have applied had he acquired his licentiate certificate or studies at a faculty. So he continued to study the three remaining subjects, which he subsequently passed.⁴³ In 1957 Trapp left for England to become the Secretary General of the Society for Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in London. In 1958 Thomas Savage was elected bishop.⁴⁴ From November in 1959 to the end of February 1960 Zulu worked as a sort of “lay assistant” with Richard Cutts who had promised to train him in pastoral work.

Carrying “the yoke” of a deacon

Zulu was ordained deacon at St. Margaret’s Church in March 1960. However, on the eve of his ordination that year, Savage discovered that Zulu had done very little pastoral work. He warned Zulu, saying that, “From now onwards [he] [would] sit on [his] neck, [he] [would] get Fr. Ricards to report on [his] ministry and [his] life [to him], [his] obedience and devotion and conduct ... everything relating to ministry.”⁴⁵

From March to August 1960 he worked under Raymond Ricards at St. Margaret’s, KwaNongoma. During this time, an issue arose concerning church land. On instructions from the Department of Education in Pretoria, a civil servant was in the process of building a vocation school on church land. Through Ricards’ intervention the project was halted and the government compensated the church with money and a new site.

According to Philip James Mbatha and Philip Ntombela, Zulu’s deep spirituality affected the parish of St. Margaret’s, KwaNongoma.⁴⁶ Zulu used to present teaching sessions mostly for learners in the categories of penitents, baptism candidates, confirmation candidates and those enquiring about *Iviyo*. These sessions⁴⁷ fostered and enriched members’ prayer life and came to be popularly known as *Isiguqo* (to kneel).⁴⁸

Zulu did not recall any bad experiences with the white missionaries who were appointed to supervise him.⁴⁹ Zulu’s experience of missionaries appears to contrast sharply with that of the black clergy working in the Roman Catholic Church during this period. George Sombe Mukuka documented their experience of racism by the missionaries.⁵⁰

Ordination to the priesthood

Finally, on 28 May 1961, Savage ordained Zulu as a priest at St. Peter’s, Vryheid, an exclusively white parish at the time. Zulu observed that it was part of Savage’s ministry to bring blacks and whites together.⁵¹

³⁸ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

³⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁴⁰ “Opinion of Aelred Stubbs”, by John Allen, 18/11/04, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200411180542.html>, accessed 31/07/12.

⁴¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

⁴² Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

⁴³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

⁴⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁴⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁴⁶ Interview with Canons James Mbatha and Philip Ntombela, Melmoth, 07/07/11.

⁴⁷ According to Zulu, these classes, mostly involving school children, were held on Saturday mornings after Mass or Morning Prayer to about midday. According to Rev. Russell Thokoza Mngomezulu, *Iviyo labafakazi ka Jesu* is a spiritual renewal movement started by Canon Philip James Mbatha in the diocese of Zululand, Telephone interview with Rev. Russell Thokoza Mngomezulu, 16/11/11.

⁴⁸ Interview with Canons Philip James Mbatha and Philip Ntombela, Melmoth, 07/07/11.

⁴⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁵⁰ See George S. Mukuka. “The Establishment of the Black Catholic Clergy in South Africa From 1887 to 1957”, PhD Thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2000, 147-154; see also Mukuka, G.S. *The Other Side of the Story: The Silent Experience of the Black Clergy in the Catholic Church in South Africa (1898-1976)*, Cluster Publications, 2008.

⁵¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

When Zulu was ordained, serving under Glover, he became part of a long tradition of African pioneer clergy, reaching back to Titus Mthembu, the first black priest to be ordained in the diocese of Zululand in 1894,⁵² Peter Masiza,⁵³ the first black Anglican priest in ACSA in 1870, and even Tiyo Soga of the Presbyterian Church, the first black clergyman in South Africa in 1864.⁵⁴

Plans to study overseas

Early in 1962, Glover asked Zulu if he wanted to continue with his studies as there was an advert in the *Anglican World* advertising theological degree courses at Selwyn College, Cambridge, England. Zulu accepted the offer.⁵⁵ Glover arranged for Zulu to meet Vernon Inman (later Bishop of Natal), a former graduate of Selwyn College, in April 1962 for an assessment. Inman reported that Zulu did not qualify as he had very little theological training and was no sportsman at all!⁵⁶ He then advised Zulu that:

If [Zulu] want[ed] to go overseas for study he must forget about Cambridge ... better to try St. Augustine in Canterbury, but then he said he [would] just apply on [his] behalf then it [would] be up to the college to decide.⁵⁷

When Zulu returned to KwaNongoma, he met Glover who welcomed him with the words: *Siyadabuka ukuthi uzauhamaba* ("We are very sorry you have to leave"). He was shocked, his heart sank as he remembered Savage's earlier threat – "I will sit on your neck ...", and assumed he was being sent home – only to be surprised with the good news that Selwyn College had in fact offered him a place on a trial basis.⁵⁸ The condition for the offer was that he had to pass his first year for permission to finish the three year BA Theology degree. Zulu recollected that "[he] had pressure to study and [he] had to work very hard".

Overseas studies and the "Honest to God" experience

Zulu received the invitation at the end of July and started at Selwyn College in Cambridge in September 1962. In the same year, Desmond Tutu went to King's College in London for his MA degree.

At Cambridge, Zulu found himself in a context that was vibrant with theological debate, the nature of belief. It was at the time when John AT Robinson, the Bishop of Woolwich, published his book *Honest to God*. Zulu had the privilege of being taught by another leading theologian, Hugh Montefiore, and was supervised by the famous church historians Alec Vidler and WHC Freund.⁵⁹

Zulu reminisced that "the lectures were very stimulating and challenging". He learnt to appreciate the system of "open lectures".⁶⁰ Theologians such as Robinson raised difficult issues that disturbed the faith of many practising Christians.⁶¹ Zulu remembered how a fellow student, a West Indian, once asked him how he held on to his faith amidst all the unsettling theological debates that were going on.⁶² He responded that, for him, there was nothing new or alarming about this as he had wrestled with similar issues before.

Zulu relied on his academic grounding acquired at St. Peter's Theological College, his parish and teaching experience from the earlier years, including those spent at KwaNongoma,⁶³ his involvement in pastoral work at St. Giles, and his regular attendance of Mass. Finally, he drew spiritual strength from his involvement in the Student Christian Movement where these issues were discussed.⁶⁴ Zulu was at Selwyn for three years, where he did a junior degree.

From England back to All Saints, Msebe - Holy Name, Empangeni

The "winds of change" under the leadership of Alpheus Zulu

⁵² Pascoe, C.F. (1901). *Two Hundred Years of the SPG: An Historical Account of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign Parts, 1701-1900*, London: SPG, 341 c.

⁵³ Mandy Goedhals. "Ungumpriste: A Study of the Life of Peter Masiza, First Black Priest in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa", *Journal of Theology For Southern Africa*, No. 68 (September, 1989), 23.

⁵⁴ Attwell, D. (1995). "The Transculturation of Enlightenment: The Exemplary Case of the Rev Tiyo Soga, African nationalist' in Denis, P. (ed.). *The Making of an Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

⁵⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁵⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁵⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁵⁸ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁵⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁶⁰ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁶¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁶² Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁶³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁶⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

- Self-sufficiency and community development

In the meantime in 1966, Alpheus Zulu, then Suffragan bishop of the diocese of St. John's in Mthatha, had become the first black bishop of the Diocese of Zululand. He was installed as bishop on the Friday, and administered the last rites to Savage, his predecessor, on Saturday, and buried him on Monday.⁶⁵

When Zulu returned from England, he was put in charge of All Saints' Church at Msebe, where he worked for eighteen months. During this time, he was introduced to sensitivity training, a programme that stressed self-support and sustainable development.⁶⁶ But the new bishop, Alpheus Zulu, felt that All Saints would not challenge Zulu academically and that he needed to stand on his own, so he became Rector of Holy Name Church at Empangeni, where he worked from 1967 to 1969.⁶⁷ During this time Alpheus Zulu promoted a new vision for the diocese which stressed self-reliance, especially among black people and the diocese.⁶⁸ Zulu immersed himself in this programme.

According to Zulu, Alpheus Zulu "was a great believer in enabling people to play their part and was willing to trust them to grow into the Christian life and had the ability to come alongside the person and be able to understand and made them to see the brighter side of a problem and then, with that, people were empowered to try engage a problem."⁶⁹ Alpheus Zulu pointed out a weakness which he had observed in Zulu while serving as a parish priest at Empangeni, noting that, "[His] error at Holy Name [Empangeni] was that [he] was willing to be a friend when people wanted [him] to be their leader and [he] was not on their side to challenge and stimulate them."⁷⁰ Alpheus Zulu's critical comment suggests that Zulu's weakness at Holy Name, Empangeni, was his tendency to stand in solidarity with the people rather than showing them clear leadership skills, stimulating them to take charge of their lives regarding self-sufficiency.

According to Zulu, the bishop felt that people should take charge of their lives and had identified poverty as the problem that undermined these efforts.⁷¹ He believed people should create opportunities for self-employment and then they could also support the church.⁷²

While Zulu was at KwaNongoma, an American, Donald Griswold, had introduced him to a "sensitivity" programme aimed at developing personal leadership.⁷³ According to Meshach Vilakazi, this project was also called *Zisizeni* (self-help/ literally meaning help yourself) for sustainable living. It started as a nutrition, health and welfare programme and became a community development project, which inspired the Anglican Church in Southern Africa – hence Zululand became a pilot project for the whole province.⁷⁴

Lecturer in the footsteps of Tutu at Alice 1970-1973

At the beginning of 1970, the staff of the Federal Theological Seminary offered Zulu a position, replacing Desmond Tutu as a theological tutor at the seminary in Alice. Tutu had been elected Bishop of Lesotho.⁷⁵ Zulu taught Old Testament, Church Administration, Church and Society at the seminary for three and half years.

At the time, the principal of the Seminary was Theodore Simpson, who had succeeded Aelred Stubbs. Stubbs was a member of the religious order of the Community of Resurrection.⁷⁶

Zulu enjoyed challenging students. "They [the students] became more interested in the Bible; relating the Bible to the vernacular languages. My concern was to try to make the students relate their studies to everyday life situations, which they found very stimulating."⁷⁷ This may reflect the influence of St. Peter's Theological College (particularly Speight), and his later theological studies at Selwyn College.

Among some of his students were: Rubin Philip (the current Bishop of Natal), Hamilton Dandala, Njongonkulu Ndungane (former Archbishop of Cape Town), Stanley Mokgoba (former Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa), Bongani Finca and Canon Philip Ntombela. During this time, Zulu met his wife, Ruth Zondeki, (maMzangwa) in Mthatha in September 1972. Ruth hailed from Peelton, near King William's Town. They were married in January 1974 in Peelton by Ernest Shai, an Anglican priest, resident in Mdantsane who stood in for the Bishop of Grahamstown, Bill Burnett.⁷⁸

⁶⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/09/11.

⁶⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁶⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁶⁸ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁶⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/07/11.

⁷⁰ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

⁷¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁷² Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁷³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁷⁴ See file Hewel/Zisizeni Project, AB2925 Z3, 1975-1980, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

⁷⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁷⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁷⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁷⁸ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

In the diocese of Grahamstown

In mid-1973 Zulu moved to the diocese of Grahamstown where he worked under Bishops Bill Burnett and Kenneth Oram successively.⁷⁹ He became Co-director of Christian Education in the diocese with Ronald Field, and in 1974 he became director. He was also involved in the Programme for Self-Supporting Clergy.⁸⁰

With Field he introduced a programme designed to break down racial barriers and to promote fellowship in the diocese. They introduced a film programme in the diocese of Zululand entitled “Sharing one cup” which stimulated discussions.⁸¹ This was not very successful as some were attracted to it, but others found it difficult to come to terms with. It seems to have made all groups uncomfortable.⁸² Zulu was also elected member of chapter of the Diocese of Grahamstown and was responsible for ordinands.

⁷⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11

⁸⁰ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11

⁸¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11

⁸² Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11

UnguSobaba – Zulu elected Bishop of Zululand

In 1975, while Zulu was working in the Diocese of Grahamstown, he received a letter from a priest working in the Diocese of Zululand, Theophilus Ngubane, asking him to put forward his name as a candidate to succeed Bishop Alpheus Zulu. Zulu later wrote to the priest saying “I am not an administrator, yes, I have been teaching; but I don’t regard myself as an able leader – but then it will be up to the elective assembly.”⁸³

Zulu was elected bishop on Saturday 26 September 1975.⁸⁴ Responding to the news of his election, he said, “Lord, I surrender, you know better why I should become a bishop.”⁸⁵ In ACSA, following the election of a bishop, the bishop-elect has to be “consecrated” and installed or “enthroned” before he starts his work.

Consecration and enthronement

Zulu was consecrated in St. George’s Cathedral in Grahamstown with Michael Nuttal, who had been elected Bishop of Pretoria on 16 November 1975.⁸⁶ Sometime before he was consecrated bishop he was required to rectify a “discrepancy” at Home Affairs regarding his name in his identity book, and incident which annoyed and irritated him. He felt that apartheid was causing havoc in his life.⁸⁷

His vision and plans for the diocese (charge)

Zulu was installed Bishop of the Diocese of Zululand⁸⁸ on 21 December 1975 by Dean William Johnston of the Cathedral in Zululand.⁸⁹ His election as Bishop of Zululand thrust him in the large shoes of his predecessor and uncle, Alpheus Zulu. Like his predecessor, he took up residence in the township of Eshowe. Alpheus Zulu had been barred from living in the bishop’s official residence in Eshowe in terms of the apartheid Group Areas Act, which designated residence according to races, and the residence had been sold.⁹⁰

In his first charge (address)⁹¹ to the diocese, he raised the issue of the state of the poorly built clergy houses and churches and pledged to improve these. Zulu was also seriously concerned with self-support as the most viable principle upon which to build the diocese.⁹² He recognised the work that his predecessor, Alpheus Zulu, had done, was aware of the low stipends of the clergy and the need to teach the faith, “live the faith”, and “experience the faith”, as well as the need to encourage the church to respond positively to self-support initiatives.⁹³

Leading the diocese during the mounting tide of apartheid

A teacher, pastor, counsellor and priest 1975-1992

Unlike the 1960s when Alpheus Zulu became bishop, Zulu assumed leadership during the period when apartheid laws were being applied more ruthlessly by the Nationalist government which, in turn, provoked mounting black resistance in the 1970s. When he became bishop in December 1975, it was just six months before the Soweto Uprising of 1976 which led to the massacre of youth by police of the apartheid government.

Zulu became bishop at the young age of 39. From the start, he received and relied on the support of more senior and influential clergy, inter alia, Philip James Mbatha and Peter Biyela.

Zulu remembered that his approach when he became a bishop was to “be very careful [not to] destroy [what needed] to grow and not to encourage what should not happen.”⁹⁴ Thus Zulu resolved that he would be his own person and not merely follow his predecessors. In other words, Zulu decided on a policy of continuing his predecessor’s policies to a degree, but also charting his own way for the diocese.

⁸³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11

⁸⁴ See Episcopal Press and News, http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/ENS/ENSpress_release.opl?pr_number=76137, accessed, 31/07/12; On the episcopate of Zulu see also Crockford’s Clerical Directory; A reference Book of the Clergy of the Provinces of Canterbury and York and of other Anglican Provinces and Dioceses, 1977-79, Eighty-Seventh issue.

⁸⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁸⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁸⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁸⁸ See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Diocese_of_Zululand, accessed 31/07/12.

⁸⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁹⁰ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

⁹¹ A charge is a public official address given by the newly elected bishop to the diocese in which he outlines his vision and plans for the diocese. It is like a political manifesto.

⁹² Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁹³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

⁹⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

Drawing from his teaching experience in Alice, and to a degree inspired by his predecessor, Alpheus Zulu, Zulu felt one of his responsibilities was to stimulate the clergy to encourage development and to make the clergy see themselves as agents of development.⁹⁵

One of his first tasks as a bishop was to visit every parish and every priest, accompanied by his wife.⁹⁶ This defined the character of the rest of his ministry.

On many of the bishop's tours in the parishes, Ruth Zulu took time to talk to the clergy wives and saw the need for wives to meet more regularly.⁹⁷ She related: "Having received permission from the bishop, [the clergy wives] asked Canon Peter Biyela to organise [them] to pray, to fellowship, and how to conduct Bible study."⁹⁸ This was the start of the Clergy Wives' Association of which Ruth Zulu was the president.

For her, the Association also served as a base from which women could be empowered to engage in other aspects of ministry. She noted that: "[I] felt that [clergy wives] couldn't always be operating in the shadows of [their] husbands, but also had to get involved in other portfolios, doing ministry, women must develop themselves."⁹⁹ Over the years the Association grew.¹⁰⁰

Following the 1976 Soweto Uprising, the white community in the diocese formed the multiracial and interdenominational organisation *Neighbours*, which sought to create infrastructure for blacks (such as schools).¹⁰¹

According to Hugh Lee, then a member of Trustees in the Diocese, Zulu and Bishop Dela Biyase of the Roman Catholic Church and leaders from Methodist and Lutheran Churches provided necessary pastoral skills for reconciliation to the communities of KwaZulu-Natal. Lee attributed Zulu's sensitivity to the issues of poverty and suffering to the fact that he himself had experienced the poverty of the local people; he had profound understanding of the common people living in poverty because he came from a similar background.¹⁰²

Zulu's gifts of pastoral care were put to the test by the conduct of his priest, Lawrence Dumisani Buthelezi. Following his suspension for disobedience, his defection to the Roman Catholic Church, and his reinstatement in ACSA, Zulu finally suspended Buthelezi for conducting services without his permission.¹⁰³ Later, Zulu heard that Buthelezi was going to be consecrated bishop in the Zionist Church. He interpreted his action as breaking ties with ACSA, suspended him and began ordaining others in that church.¹⁰⁴ Zulu then wrote to all the bishops in the Province, informing them of the matter in case Buthelezi tried to contact them.¹⁰⁵

Improving the welfare of clergy

One of the concerns that Zulu raised in his charge to the diocese after he had been elected bishop in 1975 was the welfare of the clergy. He resisted pressure to sell the Diocesan farm, which was not productive, instead turning the farm around so that it eventually generated a third of the income of the diocese.¹⁰⁶ Others such as Lee, Mbatha and Ntombela noted that this was a wise move as it helped the diocese to stand on its feet, to be financially independent.¹⁰⁷ Ntombela also recalled that, when the government took over the Charles Johnson Memorial Hospital at Nqutu, which belonged to the diocese, in 1976, the Registrar brought in a team of lawyers who challenged the government's action,¹⁰⁸ resulting in compensation of R860 000,00. Zulu used this money to, among other things, renovate old clergy housing and churches and build new ones. Part of this sum also helped to strengthen the ministry of the sisters of the Community of the Holy Name (CHN), a religious organisation that came into existence during the time of Bishop Alpheus Zulu.¹⁰⁹

Donsumndeni – a means for renewal of family life

Perhaps one of the milestones of Zulu's episcopate was his ministry to men – caring for their spiritual needs. At meetings the need emerged for the establishment of another organisation for males.¹¹⁰ Consequently

⁹⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁹⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

⁹⁷ Telephone interview, 05/07/12.

⁹⁸ Telephone interview, 05/07/12.

⁹⁹ Telephone interview, 05/07/12.

¹⁰⁰ Telephone interview, 05/07/12.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Hugh Lee, Melmoth, 29/09/11.

¹⁰² Interview with Hugh Lee, Melmoth, 29/09/11.

¹⁰³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹⁰⁵ See Letter, dated 24/08/90, Zulu to Anglican bishops of the Province, AB 2546 Z3, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, 1950-1993, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews with Philip James Mbatha and Philip Ntombela, Melmoth, 07/07/11 and Hugh Lee, Eshowe, 29/09/11.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

Donsumndeni was established in August 1983. In his view it was formed to fill the gap caused by the fact that the Bernard Mizeki Guild, the men's guild for ACSA, seemed to focus on the spiritual needs of the (lay ministers) preachers only.¹¹¹ Mandla Zulu noted that *Donsumndeni* strengthened and revived spiritual life in families,¹¹² as they saw themselves as the family of Christ.¹¹³

A roving ambassador on the continent and overseas: 1979–1993

Between 1979 and 1993 Zulu attended various international meetings and conferences on behalf of the church, including the Lambeth Conferences in London. In 1979 he visited Australia with Bill Burnett, the former Archbishop of Cape Town, to preach and teach ministry. He recalled that during the Eucharist in Melbourne, a lady gave him a letter/note and a parcel containing cloth. She told him she had used the sheet to wrap her baby daughter in, and that should his wife conceive and bear a daughter, that they should wrap their daughter in the sheet as well. When she grew up, they had to tell her that she had a sister in Australia. In September 1980, a daughter was born to the Zulus. They named her Joy, Nondumiso (meaning 'Praise').¹¹⁴

Inkatha Freedom Party and United Democratic Front

The Diocese of Zululand had always been a member of the Zululand Council of Churches (ZCC). However, on 8 June 1978, Zulu wrote to Reverend Dean LL Mthembu, Chairman of the ZCC, that the Diocese of Zululand was resigning from the council on the grounds of financial irregularities.

Therefore as Bishop this leaves me with no choice but to suspend the membership of the Anglican Church from the Zululand Council of Churches pending further investigation into the financial affairs of the Zululand Council of Churches and a return to the orthodox financial management and accountability.¹¹⁵

Zulu's action must also be seen in the broader context of the rivalry between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and United Democratic Front/South African Council of Churches (SACC). The IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi was highly critical of the SACC,¹¹⁶ (of which the ZCC was a member) for its alliance with the UDF and the African National Congress (ANC).¹¹⁷

In the 1980s the issue of economic sanctions as a means to pressurise the Nationalist government to negotiate a political settlement with the black majority was divisive in churches. ACSA and the Diocese of Zululand were also divided on this matter. In June 1985 the SACC urged "foreign companies not to invest in South Africa as a means of eradicating Apartheid."¹¹⁸ Following the Diocesan Synod of September that year, the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Zululand made a resolution not to support economic sanctions.¹¹⁹ Hence the diocese found itself opposed not only to their archbishop, Desmond Mpilo Tutu, but also many other Anglican dioceses in South Africa.

In a letter to Archbishop Tutu, dated 4 August 1988, writing on behalf of the Diocesan Council, Reverend LWM Dhladhla cited Zulu's Pastoral Letter to the Diocese to oppose Tutu's support for sanctions. In the letter Zulu asserted: "This Synod does not support disinvestment and sanctions for South Africa as a means to eradicate the apartheid system."¹²⁰ In response, Archbishop Tutu stated that he took that position as an individual and not as Archbishop of Cape Town, he had held the view before he became archbishop and even if ACSA did not support sanctions, he would still do so.¹²¹ The fact that Dhladhla and not Zulu wrote to Tutu, suggests that Zulu was reluctant to confront his senior directly.

¹¹¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 06/07/11.

¹¹² Interview with Mandla Zulu, Eshowe, 27/09/11.

¹¹³ Interview with Mandla Zulu, Eshowe, 27/09/11.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 27/09/11.

¹¹⁵ Letter, dated 08/06/78, Zulu to LL Mthembu, AB 2546 Z 3, Letters, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, 1950-1993, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

¹¹⁶ In a letter written to Philip Russell, the Archbishop of Cape Town, Buthelezi complained and criticised the Anglican Church's relationship with the South African Council of Churches, see AB 2546 Z 3, Letters, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, 1950-1993, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

¹¹⁷ For more on IFP and SACC relations see Michael Mbona, "The Church as a peace broker: the case of the Natal Church Leaders' Group and political violence in KwaZulu-Natal" http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/5130/Mbona_1_.pdf?sequence=1.

¹¹⁸ AB 2546 Z 3, Letters, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, 1950-1993, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

¹¹⁹ AB 2546 Z 3, Letters, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, 1950-1993, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

¹²⁰ Letter, dated 04/08/ 88, DLM Dhladhla to Tutu, AB 2546 Z 3, Letters, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, 1950-1993, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

¹²¹ AB 2546 Z 3, Letters, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, 1950-1993, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

In the 1980s, perhaps largely due to being a diocese that operated in the IFP enclave, perceptions prevailed in some circles in ACSA that the diocese was sympathetic of the IFP.¹²²

The 1980s, the height of Zulu's episcopate, saw a raging conflict between the largely Zulu-dominant IFP and the ANC-aligned UDF.¹²³ In Natal, the struggle for supremacy was fierce, and Ulundi was one of the contested battlefields.¹²⁴ Zulu found himself having to balance his position as a father of all in the diocese, which comprised rival members of the IFP and the UDF, a party with which his superior in the church, Archbishop Tutu, was perceived to be aligned.¹²⁵

In their struggle for supremacy, both organisations at times made overtures to church leadership, including Zulu, for covert or overt moral support. On one occasion, Anglican students of the University of Zululand asked Zulu's advice about whether they should join the UDF-aligned Anglican Students Federation. According to Zulu, he advised them not to align themselves with any political organisation.¹²⁶

Unlike his predecessor and uncle, Alpheus Zulu, who had closely aligned himself with the IFP and worked in the Zululand Homeland Government, Zulu said that he never joined any political party, yet he was often misunderstood by his detractors.¹²⁷ Zulu reminisced that while Chief Buthelezi and the IFP respected him, some of his brother bishops in ACSA and other churches ridiculed him as they thought he was a card-carrying member of the IFP.¹²⁸

He felt they did not really understand nor appreciate his political position. He recalled that Archbishop Tutu used to advise the clergy (bishops) not to be card-carrying members of political organisations.¹²⁹ In his own words, Archbishop Tutu "... made things easier for [him] in the sense that he would be invited to IFP functions but then [he] maintained [his] stand on the ministry of word and sacraments, challenging the people, regardless of whatever party."¹³⁰

However, Russell Thokoza Mngomezulu, formerly a priest who worked under Zulu, recalled his experience of Zulu's attitude to the IFP and the UDF at that time. Mngomezulu said that on Maundy Thursday, after the renewal of vows in 1989, Zulu called Mngomezulu and Denis Zungu to Diocesan Chapter¹³¹ and asked them whether they were thinking of opening the UDF offices in the IFP-dominated town of Ulundi.¹³² The question suggested Zulu's disapproval of some clergy who appeared sympathetic to the UDF. The two clergy had trained at St. Paul's College in Grahamstown, which was a UDF stronghold, and were perceived as UDF "sympathisers". While the UDF was more radical in its strategy to end apartheid, IFP was seen to be more compromising with the apartheid government.¹³³

However, the conflict between the IFP and UDF merely reflected the broader interplay of political forces that propelled the apartheid system. What was Zulu's attitude to apartheid? In his own words:

My vision was that no matter how hard the South African government worked to maintain apartheid – it would one day collapse, therefore we should think beyond apartheid. So that when apartheid finally goes, we would be better equipped and not rendered helpless. That's how I prepared people – to think beyond apartheid. After the dismantling of apartheid, people saw what I had taught and had been saying.¹³⁴

In other words, with regard to the struggle against apartheid, Zulu took neither a radical nor passive approach. However, Ntombela recalled that following his appointment as the bishop's administrative assistant in 1984,¹³⁵ he moved to Eshowe (head office of the Diocese of Zululand), a residential area designated exclusively for whites. Zulu challenged Radcliffe, the Administrator of Natal, stating that the Group Areas Act laws were against Christian principles as they turned blacks into foreigners in their own country. As a result of this, he was allowed to stay.¹³⁶

¹²² Personal reminiscences.

¹²³ See Karen E. Ferree. *Framing the Race in South Africa, The Political Origins of Racial Consensus Election*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

¹²⁴ *Op. cit.*

¹²⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

¹²⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

¹²⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

¹²⁸ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

¹²⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

¹³⁰ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

¹³¹ Diocesan Chapter is the highest executive committee in an Anglican diocese where the bishop and the senior clergy make decisions of pastoral nature that affect the clergy and lay people.

¹³² Informal discussions with Rev. Fr. Russell Thokoza Mngomezulu, Kokstad 01/07/11.

¹³³ Personal reminiscences.

¹³⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/07/11.

¹³⁵ See AB 2546 Z3, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

¹³⁶ Interview with Canons Philip Ntombela and Philip James Mbatha, Melmoth, 07/07/11.

According to Mngomezulu, Zulu experienced some racism during the Synod held in 1993. A young white priest suggested that the bishop was an incompetent administrator as he had not responded to a letter which had been written to him. Mngomezulu noted that Zulu “was shocked and found it very difficult to respond” and “No one defended the bishop as his personal assistant Philip Ntombela was away at Harvard, studying.”¹³⁷

Towards the end of his episcopate in 1992, Zulu was embroiled in a squabble with Dr. John Wright of St. Mary’s Hospital, KwaMagwaza, who felt that the diocese, which owned the hospital, was making it difficult for him to work.¹³⁸ He filed a lawsuit against the hospital board and took the bishop [the diocese] to the industrial court for unfair dismissal. Subsequently the court overturned the board’s decision.¹³⁹

In his letter to Zulu, Archbishop Tutu advised him to reinstate Dr. Wright in his position in terms of the court’s ruling as Tutu feared that the issue could bring the church into disrepute.¹⁴⁰ The case in fact led to much negative media publicity for the church.

In 1993, the Anglican bishops meeting at KwaMagwaza elected Zulu Bishop of Swaziland to succeed Bernard Mkhabela after the Elective Assembly failed to elect a bishop.¹⁴¹ Zulu never saw the results of the commission regarding the hospital lawsuit as he had moved to Swaziland. Ruth Zulu noted, “It was a relief that [they] were now leaving Zululand to work in the diocese of Swaziland as the hospital issue had negatively affected [them].”¹⁴²

Commenting on this lawsuit, one informant commented that “[Zulu’s] one weakness was his administration. He allowed others to take decisions that would have been his. Pastoral care was fine with the clergy. He was unfortunately not well advised which led to unfortunate decisions.”¹⁴³ He concluded that “[administration] was a glaring situation that caused anguish in the diocese – that was a problem area.”¹⁴⁴

Similarly, Rev. Maggy Hamalainen, a priest who worked under Zulu, remarked that while Zulu was a very good spiritual man, a pastor, during his last years in the diocese, “[he] was losing control of things not because he was a weak person but because the administrative side was not his strength.”¹⁴⁵ Hamalainen went on to assert that Zulu “didn’t understand how things had to be organised ... he needed administrative assistance to organise his life properly.”¹⁴⁶ To illustrate her point, Hamalainen recalled that in 1990, as they prepared for Synod, Zulu was impressed and appreciated the manner in which Hamalainen organised the accommodation.

This view must be seen in light of what Zulu himself had said to Theophilus Ngubane in the period before he was elected, “I am not an administrator ...” Mandla Zulu noted that Zulu was not a strong administrator; his gifts lay elsewhere: as a pastor, a teacher, a deeply caring person and a shepherd. This made him an outstanding leader.¹⁴⁷ Both Mandla Zulu and Mngomezulu noted that the support of Ntombela and others was critical to Zulu’s administration in the diocese.¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, writing recently in the *Southern Anglican*, Hamalainen narrated how she experienced Zulu as a pastoral figure, “the person [she and her husband] both knew, loved and trusted the most ...”¹⁴⁹

Another informant, who worked closely with the bishop, stated that the issue of the hospital coincided with another matter when, in response to government conservation laws relating to grazing, Zulu had to evict people and cattle from church land.¹⁵⁰ The two matters created some unhappiness.¹⁵¹ The same informant felt that Zulu’s appointment of people into senior positions following wrong advice alienated him from some people during his last years in the diocese.¹⁵²

At the 1990 Synod, delivering his charge, Zulu complained of “the poor financial situation of wages which even undermined efforts to send clergy for higher training”.¹⁵³ He went on to say that: “We are forced to scratch and beg every time we need to build. We are not able to provide realistic stipends to our clergy, and

¹³⁷ Informal discussions with Rev. Fr. Russell Thokoza Mngomezulu, Kokstad, 01/07/11.

¹³⁸ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

¹³⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

¹⁴⁰ Letter dated 21/12/92, Tutu to Zulu, AB 2546 Z3, Archbishop of Cape Town, 1950-1993, Historical papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi 26/09/11, see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Diocese_of_Swaziland, accessed, 31/07/12.

¹⁴² Telephone interview with Ruth Zulu, 05/07/11.

¹⁴³ Interview with anonymous, Eshowe, 26/09/11.

¹⁴⁴ Telephone interview with Anonymous, Eshowe, 07/07/12.

¹⁴⁵ Telephone interview with Rev. Maggy Hamalainen, 05/07/12.

¹⁴⁶ Telephone interview with Rev. Maggy Hamalainen, 05/07/12.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Mandla Zulu, Eshowe, 26/09/11.

¹⁴⁸ Telephone interview with Rev. Fr. Russell Thokoza Mngomezulu, 26/11/11; interview with Mandla Zulu, Eshowe, 26/09/11.

¹⁴⁹ The Rev. Maggie Hamalainen, “God in the Silence”, *Southern Anglican*, vol. 33, June 2012, p. 50.

¹⁵⁰ Telephone interview with anonymous, 05/07/12.

¹⁵¹ Telephone interview with anonymous, 05/07/12.

¹⁵² Telephone interview with anonymous, 05/07/12.

¹⁵³ Synod held 19-21, October, 1990, AB 2546 Z 3, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, 1950-1993, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

realistic salaries to our lay workers. Can we honestly call this GOD'S WILL FOR US?"¹⁵⁴ That Zulu complained of the poor financial situation in 1990, suggests that the efforts to become self-reliant embarked on in 1976 did not yield the much-desired result.

Zulu served the Diocese of Zululand for 17 years. At the end, Zulu felt that he and some of the people in his diocese "... needed a change and that it would be good if [he] went to Swaziland".¹⁵⁵

Bishop of Swaziland 1993–2001

In November 1992, Zulu moved to Swaziland where he was installed in March 1993 at All Saint's Cathedral in Mbabane.¹⁵⁶ Zulu had to deal with the lack of financial resources in the diocese. With the assistance of others, he tried to make the church farm productive and started planting cabbage, lettuce and tomatoes. He challenged people to consider taking tithing seriously, and, while some responded well, others were indifferent.¹⁵⁷

Another challenge Zulu faced was to teach clergy and younger people to respect each other. A group of young people called "God's Army" believed the church was going in the wrong direction and had to be turned around. Zulu's role was to facilitate reconciliation.¹⁵⁸ According to Rev. Josiah Mahlalela, Zulu was a good listener and patient with the clergy, making sure he heard both sides of the story. He tried to restore young people's respect for the clergy and get the adults to understand young people, though he was not successful.¹⁵⁹

Perhaps the most formidable challenge to his episcopate that Zulu faced, was the attempt by members of a Diocesan Synod in Swaziland to pass a vote of no confidence in his leadership. The clergy put pressure on Zulu to put the issue of his leadership on the agenda of the synod. On the advice of the Provincial Registrar, he did not do so as it contravened the Constitution and the Canons of the Church.¹⁶⁰

Zulu said the tendency for the clergy to dictate to their bishop had a long tradition in the diocese, going back to the time of his predecessor and perhaps even further. The clergy had grown used to doing things the way they liked.¹⁶¹ One such priest was Rev. Londolozwa Shongwe, who wanted things his own way and did not want to be disciplined.¹⁶²

While in Swaziland, Zulu was elected the Dean of the Anglican Province of Southern Africa by the Anglican Bishops of Southern Africa in 1996. He remained in that position until he retired in 2001.

Vicar-General of Mpumalanga

Zulu left Swaziland in January 2001. In July 2001, the Bishop of Pretoria, Johannes Seoka, asked him to be parish priest of St. Michael and All Angels in Nelspruit and Archdeacon of Mpumalanga.¹⁶³ While in the Diocese of Pretoria, as Vicar-general (2001–2005), Zulu was given the special task of preparing Mpumalanga to become a diocese independent of the Diocese of Pretoria. The diocese was formed in June 2004 and Zulu was appointed Vicar-general of the new diocese. He set up the structures and a process of electing a bishop.¹⁶⁴

To accomplish this, Zulu leaned on his long experience as a parish priest and as bishop in Zululand and Swaziland. Zulu left the diocese in 2005, the same year that the Diocese of Mpumalanga elected Eric Walker as bishop. Zulu celebrated his 50th year in the priesthood on 5 June 2011.¹⁶⁵

Conclusion

In this study, I outlined the life-story and particularly the ministry of Lawrence Bekisisa Zulu as Bishop in the Anglican dioceses of Zululand and Swaziland for 25 years and Vicar-general of Mpumalanga for three years. The fact that the church entrusted him with these positions suggests the strength of his moral authority and the respect that he had earned. More specifically, I highlighted Zulu's outstanding pastoral leadership skills in engaging with the issues relating to social development in the communities. Similarly, I also illustrated that Zulu's leadership gifts in teaching and preaching and his spirituality as a priest enriched the life and ministry of the clergy and laity. These two aspects of ministry can be partially attributed to his early experience growing up at KwaMagwaza in a family and community struggling in the context of colonialism and apartheid. This was

¹⁵⁴ Synod held 19-21, October, 1990, AB 2546 Z 3, Archbishop of Cape Town, Zululand Diocese, 1950-1993, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, Witwatersrand University.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 26/09/11.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/07/11.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/07/11.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/07/11.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/07/11.

¹⁶² Telephone interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, 19/11/11.

¹⁶³ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Bishop Lawrence Zulu, Ulundi, 07/11/11.

nurtured by his theological training at St. Peter's and later at Selwyn College and subsequently reinforced through his ministry as a priest. While these were Zulu's outstanding gifts, administrative skills were apparently not his strong suit. However, the apparent gap created by this was filled in by able administrators.

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