

# ST. MARY'S MESSENGER

DECEMBER 2025

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## ATTORNEY GENERAL KEN PAXTON SUES STATE HOUSING AGENCY FOR DISCRIMINATING AGAINST CHRISTIAN GROUPS AND OTHER RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

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Attorney General Ken Paxton filed suit against the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs ("TDHCA") to stop them from enforcing unconstitutional rules that restrict religious organizations from receiving federal and state funding for programs that serve homeless and low-income Texans.

[Continues in State News,  
Page 4.](#)



## EPISCOPALIANS NURTURE ADVENT TRADITION OF DISPLAYING NATIVITIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

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Advent has arrived at St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Brevard, North Carolina, and the seasonal altar furnishings aren't the only telltale signs. For three days this week, Dec. 4-6, the congregation will place tables across the pews to create makeshift displays for an exhibit of nearly 200 nativities from around the world.

The annual event, open to the community, is called "[No Room at the Inn,](#)" and it has become a beloved, festive ritual for this Western North Carolina church. The parishioners provide a diverse assortment of nativities ...

[Continues in  
National News,  
Page 7.](#)

## SCHISM THREATENED IN MOZAMBICAN CHURCH

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One of the Anglican Communion's newest provinces, the Anglican Church of Mozambique and Angola (IAMA), has been plunged into controversy about a disputed episcopal election in the Diocese of Lebombo. Representatives from Lebombo and the Diocese of Nampula announced at a contentious provincial synod in August that they intend to remove their dioceses from the IAMA.

The Most Rev. Vincent Msosa, the church's first elected presiding bishop and the Anglican Communion's youngest primate, is at the center of the divisions, which run along generational and tribal lines. Critics allege that a series of canonical changes supported by Msosa that were slated for discussion at the August synod are aimed at magnifying his power.

[Continues in International  
News, Page 13.](#)

## **ATTENTION ALL CHURCH MEMBERS!**



### ALTAR FLOWERS

If anyone is interested in furnishing the altar flowers, please call the church office at 432-267-8201 or email the Parish Secretary at [stmarysbt@gmail.com](mailto:stmarysbt@gmail.com).

### SERVING SIGNUP

At this time, we are looking for people who are willing to volunteer to serve during the Sunday morning service. There are several positions available for anyone who would like to help.

The positions are:

- Chalice- Serves the cup of wine.
- Lector- Reads the lessons and the psalms, and the Gospel during Morning Prayer.
- Acolyte- Carries the cross and the Gospel, and guards the front.
- Ushers- Welcomes people and direct them as needed

If you are interested, please call the church office or email the Parish Secretary at [stmarysbt@gmail.com](mailto:stmarysbt@gmail.com).

The church would also like to thank everyone who does volunteer!

**QUIZ QUESTION 1:** (Quiz answers will be on the last page.)

**What animals were present at Jesus' birth?**

- A.** cows, sheep and camels
- B.** cows, sheep and donkeys
- C.** lions and tigers and bears
- D.** Who knows?

**DECEMBER CALENDAR**

**1<sup>st</sup>** Saint Andrew the Apostle

**7<sup>th</sup>** Second Sunday of Advent

**14<sup>th</sup>** Third Sunday of Advent

**21<sup>st</sup>** Fourth Sunday of Advent

**22<sup>nd</sup>** Saint Thomas the Apostle

**25<sup>th</sup>** Christmas Day

**26<sup>th</sup>** Saint Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

**27<sup>th</sup>** Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

**28<sup>th</sup>** First Sunday after Christmas

**29<sup>th</sup>** The Holy Innocents

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**Sunday**

9:30 AM- Christian Education

10:30 AM- Morning Service

Coffee Hour- Following the service

**Wednesday**

10:30 AM- Bible Study/Coffee hour

5:30 PM- Evening Prayer

**Monday thru Thursday**

8:30AM- Morning Prayer (In the chapel & on YouTube)

**ANNIVERSARY WISHES**

**30<sup>th</sup>** Christopher & Kaysha Simpson

*Happy anniversary!!*

**BIRTHDAY WISHES**

**4<sup>th</sup>** Johnny Smith

**7<sup>th</sup>** Allene Ausmus

**19<sup>th</sup>** Sherri Anthony

**28<sup>th</sup>** Christopher Simpson

*Happy birthday!!*

## ATTORNEY GENERAL KEN PAXTON SUES STATE HOUSING AGENCY FOR DISCRIMINATING AGAINST CHRISTIAN GROUPS AND OTHER RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

NOVEMBER 24, 2025

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The follow article is a press release found on [Ken Paxton Attorney General of Texas](#).

*[Continued from front page]* The lawsuit challenges TDHCA regulations that condition access to public benefits on a religious organization's willingness to alter or abandon core elements of its faith. Currently, under these rules, any organization receiving TDHCA funding to operate homelessness or housing programs must agree not to engage in religious activities within programs supported by the funds. Attorney General Paxton argues that these restrictions are unconstitutional because they discriminate against religious entities solely because they are religious.

"State agencies have no authority to force Christians and other religious organizations to censor their beliefs just to serve their communities," said

Attorney General Paxton. "Constitutionally protected religious liberty must be upheld in Texas and across the country. These TDHCA's provisions within certain programs, which deter funding from going towards churches and religious organizations, must be struck down."

This lawsuit follows Attorney General Paxton's [action](#) against provisions within Texas higher education work-study programs that discriminated against Christian and other religious students. Attorney General Paxton is committed to striking down any provisions that would undermine religious liberty and take away federal and state funding opportunities based on religious views.

To read the lawsuit, [click here](#).

### **QUIZ QUESTION 2:**

**When Mary became pregnant,**

- A. Joseph married her
- B. Joseph wanted to dissolve their relationship
- C. Mary left Nazareth for a while
- D. both b and c

## TEXAS GOV. ABBOTT FORMALLY REQUESTS SUSPENSION OF CAIR'S TAX-EXEMPT STATUS

BY MACK SHAW | DECEMBER 2, 2025

The following article and photo have been taken from [Fox 7 Austin](#). The article has been modified for ease of reading. The photo is of Texas Governor Greg Abbott during a roundtable discussion on May 24, 2018.

### The Brief

- Gov. Abbott asked the U.S. Treasury to investigate CAIR and suspend its tax-exempt status.
- Abbott labels CAIR a terrorist-linked group; CAIR and Muslim leaders strongly deny the claims.
- CAIR has sued Abbott, calling his designation unconstitutional and based on false statements.



Texas Gov. Greg Abbott has requested the suspension of tax exemption for the [Council on American-Islamic Relations](#) (CAIR).

The governor's Tuesday [letter to the U.S. Treasury secretary](#) is the latest in a recent back-and-forth between Abbott and Texas Islamic leaders.

### Abbott requests CAIR investigation

What we know: Abbott addressed his letter to U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, asking for an investigation into CAIR and the suspension of its status as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization.

Abbott says official documents refer to CAIR as a "direct subsidiary of the Muslim Brotherhood and as a 'front group' for Hamas in the United States." [Click to open this PDF in a new window.](#)

What we don't know: Bessent hasn't responded publicly to the request at the time of publishing.

### Abbott labels CAIR a terrorist organization

The backstory: Last month, Abbott designated CAIR as a "successor organization" of the Muslim Brotherhood and a Foreign Terrorist Organization under the Texas Penal Code. The designation subjects the organization to potential civil and criminal penalties,

including a prohibition from purchasing land in Texas.

In a letter sent to DPS Director Colonel Freeman Martin days later, Abbott accused the Muslim Brotherhood and CAIR of having "long made their goals clear: to forcibly impose Sharia law and establish Islam's 'mastership of the world.'"

Abbott's directive stated that the groups' actions to support terrorism and subvert laws through "violence, intimidation, and harassment are unacceptable and have no place in Texas."

### **Texas Islamic leaders denounce Abbott**

Dig deeper: After Abbott's actions, the leaders of several Muslim groups in North Texas held a news conference to denounce the governor's proclamation.

They called Abbott's designation dangerous and destructive, denying his claims about the non-profit.

CAIR, which was founded in 1994 and is the nation's largest Muslim civil rights organization, stated in a lawsuit that the proclamation is based on "defamatory" and "provably false statements" and finds no support in Texas law.

The organization stressed that it is an independent American nonprofit that operates in full compliance with laws, and is not a member or affiliate of any foreign organization. CAIR's mission is to enhance the public's understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, and promote justice. The group has vocally condemned all forms of bigotry, unjust violence, and terrorism throughout its history.

### **QUIZ QUESTION 3:**

**Just what is a heavenly host?**

- A.** an angelic choir
- B.** the welcoming angel in heaven
- C.** an array of angels
- D.** none of the above

## EPISCOPALIANS NURTURE ADVENT TRADITION OF DISPLAYING NATIVITIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

BY DAVID PAULSEN | DECEMBER 2, 2025

The following text and photos have been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#). The first photo is of a nativity set made in Japan at St. Philip's Episcopal Church (Brevard, North Carolina).

[\[Continued from front page\]](#) ... accompanied by cards detailing their origins and distinctive features.

"It's just a lovely way to open the doors to the community and say, 'Hey, come and see,'" Dolores Brown, one of the event's organizers, told Episcopal News Service.



Nativities — miniature scenes of the Holy Family at the manger, surrounded by the first Christmas visitors — are one of Advent's most recognizable seasonal displays in Christian churches and households worldwide. A thriving consumer market also exists for nativities reflecting global cultures, from [Canada](#) to [Cameroon](#). St. Philip's is one of numerous Episcopal churches showcasing some of that Christian diversity as part of their Advent festivities.

St. James Episcopal Church in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, invites its community to such an exhibit Dec. 5-7 that it calls the ["Wonder of Christmas."](#) In Ayer, Massachusetts, St. Andrew's

Episcopal Church will host its annual ["In a Manger"](#) event, which began in 2001 with 75 nativities. For this year's event at St. Andrew's, Dec. 13 and 14, more than 400 will be on display, "each one showing the birth of Jesus through the lens of a different culture, craft tradition and artistic imagination."

In Topeka, Kansas, Episcopal congregations are among the 30 local churches participating in the 14th annual ["Nativities and Noel"](#) event Dec. 5 and 6 hosted by the Topeka Stake Center of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The nearly 900 nativities to be displayed come from about 100 different countries.

Washington National Cathedral, the landmark Episcopal cathedral in the United States' capital city, also has incorporated a nativity exhibit into its annual Advent and Christmas festivities. "One Church, One Family" features 800 manger scenes from the cathedral's collection and runs through Jan. 18. Most of the nativities come from cathedral member Beulah Sommer's personal collection, which she donated to the cathedral in 1998.

"The story of the Holy Family, told in different cultures using various media and material, has the power to unite the human family amidst war, conflict and political division," the [cathedral says on its website](#). "Their story is our story, and their hope is our hope."

This is the fourth year that St. Philip's is hosting "No Room at the Inn." The event drew about 700 visitors last year, Brown said, and she is looking forward to welcoming visitors again this week, with

nativities originating from Alaska to Portugal to Japan.

Brown is contributing from her own growing collection of manger scenes. During a recent trip to Italy, she couldn't resist shopping for examples of that country's nativity sets.

Other parishioners are donating their time to provide music in the church while visitors inspect the nativities on display. The congregation also collects donations for Episcopal Relief & Development, and like last year, this year's donations will be specified to support ongoing relief efforts in the region after Hurricane Helene.

The event often attracts community members who have never set foot inside St. Philip's before, Brown said, creating some "delightful" new connections.

"We've all discovered that doing this early Advent, it just sets the tone for the season," she said. "It's just been the most positive and lovely thing."



*Nativities on display at St. Philip's*

## THE 'QUIET' SERVICE OF US VETERANS IS LAUDED DURING FIRST CHURCHWIDE VETERANS DAY SERVICE

BY MELODIE WOERMAN | NOVEMBER 12, 2025

*The following text and photo have been taken from the [Episcopal News Service](#). The photo is of (from left to right) the Rev. Ryan Parke, Bp. Suffragan Ann Ritonia, and Bp. Sean Rowe during the Veterans Day service.*

Veterans Day is both personal and sacred, the Rt. Rev. Ann Ritonia told participants at The Episcopal Church's first churchwide Veterans Day service on Nov. 11.

During her sermon, Ritonia, bishop suffragan for The Episcopal Church's [Armed Forces and Federal Ministries](#), noted that she has served in the U.S. Marine Corps and has a family filled with veterans – her grandfather was awarded the Purple Heart for fighting in France in World War I, her father and two uncles served during the Korean War, and a cousin was in Vietnam.

She told those at the Chapel of Christ the Lord at the Episcopal Church Center in New York City and those watching by livestream that like her family, most veterans simply “did their duty, they cared for their families and ... quietly carried on.” And it is their stories that are the important part of Veterans Day, she said, because they are real people “who carried burdens most of us will never fully see.”

While veterans have stood tall in uniform, she said, “many have also knelt beside wounded friends. They've experienced camaraderie like no other, being part of something larger than



themselves, and they've had to write or deliver letters home they hoped would never be read. And they've carried not just backpacks of gear, but they've carried grief.”

Ritonia oversees more than 100 Episcopal chaplains serving across the United States Armed Forces, at Veterans Administration medical centers and at federal correctional institutions.

Presiding Bishop Sean Rowe officiated at the service of Holy Eucharist, during

which he asked participants to “especially give thanks for the ministry of Bishop Ann and the ministry that she leads, and for all of you who participate in it and serve those who serve our nation.”

The service included Old Testament and Epistle readings recorded by Episcopal veterans and the “commissioning for further service” of five Episcopal chaplains.

Pre-recorded music for the prelude, offertory and postlude was provided by military musicians at Washington National Cathedral, including the U.S. Army Brass Quintet. Following the service, they played a medley of the songs associated with each of the U.S. military branches, with those in attendance who served in the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force or Coast Guard

standing as their branch's song was played.

Veterans Day, which honors all who have served in America's military, was first observed as a U.S. holiday on Nov. 11, 1954. Before that, the day was known as Armistice Day, in honor of the armistice signed on Nov. 11, 1918, that ended World War I. Armistice Day was designated to honor those who had died in military service. Those fallen service members are now remembered on Memorial Day in May.

Military chaplaincy within The Episcopal Church will mark its 250th anniversary next year. The Rev. John Hurt, an Episcopal minister, began serving as a chaplain in the Continental Army in 1776.

#### **QUIZ QUESTION 4:**

**What is a manger anyway?**

- A.** a barn
- B.** a place for hay
- C.** a feeding trough
- D.** a Bible term for the church nursery

## SEMINARY OPENS IN PAKISTAN

BY SHAHZAD GILL | NOVEMBER 10, 2025

*The following article and photo have been taken from the [Living Church](#). The picture is of Bp. Azad Marshall cutting the ribbon at the seminary's dedication.*

The Church of Pakistan marked a historic milestone November 1 with the inauguration of St. Thomas Theological College, Khanewal, while also celebrating the 55th anniversary of the church's formation.

"This inauguration is not merely the opening of a building but the beginning of a movement for the expansion of God's kingdom," said the Most Rev. Dr. Azad Marshall, Moderator and President Bishop of the Church of Pakistan.

"If our faith is to stand strong amid persecution and fear, we must raise men and women who think biblically, act compassionately, and lead faithfully," he added.

Marshall and the Rt. Rev. Leo Roderick Paul, Bishop of Multan, led the dedication service at the seminary

campus and a service of Holy Communion at nearby 6 Civil Lines Church. The service was attended by bishops from across the church and numerous dignitaries, including Naveed Jeeva, a member of the National Assembly.

### A New, Central Site

St. Thomas Theological College was founded as the Church of Pakistan's national seminary in 1987, just 17 years after the ecumenical church was established as a union of the nation's Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran churches. It is named for the apostle who traditionally brought the gospel to South Asia in ancient times.

It was originally based at the historic Holy Trinity Church campus in Karachi, in Southern Pakistan's Sindh province. But

five of the church's dioceses—Raiwind, Lahore, Faisalabad, Sialkot, and Multan—are in the Punjab region of central Pakistan, and the church's synod decided to move the seminary to a more central site. The



Diocese of Multan donated facilities for the purpose.

The college offers Bachelor of Theology (B.Th.) and Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degrees, which blend biblical scholarship with practical formation in pastoral care, interfaith dialogue, and community leadership. Classes are taught mainly in Urdu, the national language, ensuring accessibility to students from all eight of the church's dioceses.

Workshops for lay leaders, women's ministry training, and clergy enrichment programs are planned at St. Thomas' alongside its regular work of preparing ordinands and catechists, ensuring the seminary remains a living center of faith and service.

Bishop Paul said he took special pride in the seminary's being based in Khanewal.

"My grandfather was transferred from the Central Cathedral of Lahore to this church in Khanewal," he recalled. "I myself served here in this parish before being consecrated as bishop of this diocese. This place carries our family's faith journey and the legacy of the Church's mission."

### **Formed in the Mind of Christ**

In his dedicatory address, based on Philippians 2:5-7, Marshall spoke on the theme "Let the Mind of Christ Be in You."

"Knowledge must lead us not to pride but to the likeness of Christ. The goal of this college is that knowledge may become light—that the mind of Christ be formed in every student who enters these halls," he said.

Marshall outlined a threefold journey of theological education: information, formation, and transformation.

"Knowledge must become formation; formation must become transformation. Theological education should produce not only scholars but shepherds—servant-leaders who reflect the humility and obedience of Christ."

He said that he hoped the seminary would become the Church of Pakistan's missionary hub.

"'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' This campus should prepare agents of transformation—witnesses of God's kingdom in the Church and in society."

The inauguration service was conducted using the liturgy of the Church of Pakistan's new Book of Common Prayer, which contains rites in English and Urdu. Marshall formally dedicated the new prayer book for use in the Diocese of Multan.

"This book will enrich the worship and witness of our clergy," Paul added, "ensuring that our faith continues to be expressed in the language of our people."

## SCHISM THREATENED IN MOZAMBIKAN CHURCH

BY DANIEL SITOLE & MARK MICHAEL | DECEMBER 1, 2025

The following article and photos have been taken from the [Living Church](#). The photo is of "Bishops of the IAMA, gathered at the farewell service for former acting primate Carlos Matsinhe, 2024."

[Continued from front page]

### 'Competition Instead of Fraternity'

The new church's second provincial synod meeting, scheduled for Zoom August 29 and 30, was slated to consider the canonical changes, and proved to be a flashpoint for the conflict.

An initial dispute focused on the church's rules for convening its synod. Canon 1 of the [IAMA's Canons &](#)



[Constitution](#) specifies that regular sessions of the church's provincial synod must be scheduled seven months in advance, and Canon 48 states that five months' notice is necessary for amending the church's canons and constitution.

Archbishop Msosa told The Living Church that he called for the meeting at a gathering of the church's bishops in April, relying on a provision in Article III of the IAMA's constitution that allows the presiding bishop to alter the time of the synod for good cause if a majority of

bishops agree. All ten of the bishops present consented to changing the dates, he says.

When the provincial synod meeting began, Msosa told TLC, delegates from the Diocese of Lebombo and Bishop Manuel Ernesto of Nampula began

interrupting the meeting, saying they wanted to speak.

Shortly afterward, the delegates from the Diocese of Lebombo posted a

message in the meeting chat protesting that the synod had not been properly called, because seven months' notice had not been given, as required by Canon 1.

The delegates from the Diocese of Lebombo then logged off. The delegates from Nampula, Msosa said, raised the same issue, and then also left. The next day, the delegates from the Diocese of Nampula sent a [letter](#) announcing that the diocese planned to leave the IAMA.

Nampula's letter accuses Msosa of unilaterally changing the date of the synod and argues that canonical changes could not be considered because the synod's date had been fixed less than five months in advance. "Violations of canonical and constitutional norms are systematic and intentional" across the church, they allege.

"As one of the founding dioceses of the province, we conclude that the current situation in the province, characterized by competition instead of fraternity, a focus on dismantling the legal architecture that, in the context of religious communities, was created to spare each generation from having to create its own legal system instead of concentrating on spirituality and the bond of peace, is moving away from the IAMA project initially conceived by all."

These reasons, the letter said, led the diocese's delegates to "withdraw from the provincial synod because it is a synod that should not have been constituted as such," and the Diocese of Nampula further planned to "withdraw from the IAMA and distance itself from its current state of operation."

Ernesto told TLC that his diocese's standing committee has begun formal steps to disaffiliate from the IAMA "to protect our integrity and our diocese from harmful actions promoted by Archbishop Vicente." Action on the matter would be taken by the diocesan synod.

"Our priority is to distance ourselves from the trajectory that the province is heading to," he said, adding that he has called on the Anglican Communion Office to intervene. He added that the Communion's leaders and IAMA's mother church, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, "have moral authority over the new provinces and structures they put in place. As a young province, IAMA should not be left struggling alone to survive."

### **Lebombo Election**

Msosa's opponents trace the conflict to disputes over the election of a new bishop for the Diocese of Lebombo, the church's oldest diocese, which is based in Mozambique's capital and largest city, Maputo. Msosa described it as the IAMA's only financially sustainable diocese. The see was vacated when the IAMA's first primate, Bishop Carlos Matsinhe, retired in 2024. An election had been scheduled for September 6, but Msosa canceled it.

TLC was told that a leading candidate in the election is the Very Rev. Tomas Zandamela, a senior court judge, who has been the diocese's vicar general since Matsinhe's retirement. Before Zandamela's ministry in Lebombo, he served in his diocese with distinction, Ernesto told TLC, leading the development of four church plants in Nampula. Zandamela worked in Nampula without a stipend, while also serving as a judge.

Archbishop  
Vicente  
Msosa



Archbishop Msosa [said](#) he canceled the election on the recommendation of the church's chancellor because the Diocese of Lebombo had failed to pay its annual contribution of U.S. \$1,000 to the provincial office, and because the members of the consultative council responsible for managing the election had been chosen incorrectly.

Msosa questioned whether Zandamela was canonically qualified to stand for office. "Our constitution is clear on the requirements. A candidate should have a bachelor's degree in theology [and] work at least ten years full time [in church ministry]. I do not know if their preferred candidate meets the requirements," Msosa told TLC.

Several senior clergy, including Ernesto, told TLC that Msosa's preferred candidate for Lebombo is the Rev. Mauricio Mungunhe, his former classmate at the Seminary of the

Transfiguration in Grahamstown, South Africa, who now leads the province's newly created mission department. Msosa told TLC that five priests have been nominated for the position, and he doesn't have a favorite among them.

The dispute over Zandamela's qualifications surfaces a tension between the letter of the IAMA's canons and the way the young church has functioned. Canon 18, which lays out the ideal qualifications for bishops inherited from the well-established Church of Southern Africa, also gives the presiding bishop authority to relax the rules when it is "in the best interests of the Diocese concerned."

This has been the practice in the IAMA since the beginning, especially because nearly all the clergy in nine of its dioceses are not paid salaries. Ernesto claims that Msosa's intention to refuse to relax the canons in Zandamela's case "explores the gaps of the constitution against or in favor of some."

"We need to consider the intentions of the legislators, to include everyone while also taking the episcopal ministry seriously, and not to exclude. This is the interpretation of the canons that served all the new IAMA bishops, otherwise no one could be qualified," he said.

Msosa himself benefited from the common practice of relaxing the requirements, Ernesto said. When he was consecrated as Bishop of Niassa in 2017, Msosa had only been ordained for four

years and was five years short of the canonically required age of 40.

Ernesto told TLC that the election for diocesan bishop in Lebombo was rescheduled by the archbishop for February 2026, but the diocese would prefer to convene a synod first to determine its status in relation to the IAMA.

### **Canonical Changes**

Proposed [changes](#) to the provincial canons supported by Msosa have also caused contention, with some claiming that they are aimed at increasing the archbishop's power.

The IAMA's canons, which were closely based on the canons of its mother church, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, specify that the church's presiding bishop is chosen for a renewable term of five years, and that the see must rotate between bishops of the church's Angolan and Mozambican dioceses.

An amendment proposed by Bishop Lucas Mchemba of Niassa would allow the presiding bishop to remain in office until retirement, arguing that "the model of holding elections every five years is not sustainable, as it would mean that every five years the Province would enter into a power struggle, which is not healthy for the Province."

Another proposal amends Canon 18, which establishes the criteria for a potential bishop. The proposed changes keep the requirement of a degree in

theology, but shorten the required years of service in full-time ministry from 10 to five. Most importantly, it removes the archbishop's power to relax the requirements, a common practice in the church since its founding.

Opponents claim that the changes discriminate against older clergy (like Zandamela), many of whom were prevented by civil wars in Angola and Mozambique from doing theological study in South Africa. Many older clergy performed their ministry while also holding secular jobs as teachers, doctors, and lawyers.

"We are the priests who risked our lives preaching the Word of God during the 15-year civil war in Mozambique," said an older priest from Northern Mozambique. "We are the same, again preaching and helping persecuted Christians being killed in Cabo Delgado and Nampula by the jihadists."

The provincial synod decided not to vote on the canonical changes after the abrupt departure of the delegates from Lebombo and Nampula.

Msosa's opponents are also frustrated about his attempts to move the province's offices from Mozambique's capital to his see city, Quelimane, in central Mozambique, 1,800 kilometers away.

"The process is being implemented despite the proposed changes having yet to be approved," said one Mozambican

bishop, who asked not to be named. Provincial employees, he added, have filed a lawsuit to stop the forced move.

A bishop also told TLC that Msosa attempted to convince his fellow bishops to allow him to use the now-vacant residence of the Bishop of Lebombo in Maputo, but they declined. "That house belongs exclusively to the bishop of that diocese," he said.

Msosa's opponents also say they are frustrated that so many Nyanja have been elevated to positions of senior leadership in IAMA. Most Nyanja or Chewa people live in Malawi, but about 1.784 million live in Northern and Central Mozambique, where they make up a little over five percent of the population.

"Four of the eight bishops in Mozambique are from the archbishop's tribe. They are himself in Zambezia, Bishop Lucas Mchema of Niassa, Bishop Paulo Hansine of Pungue, and Bishop Emmanuel Capeta of Inhambane. In Angola, three of the four bishops are also from one tribe," said Jose Manjate, an Anglican layman from Maputo.

Dona Natalia, a lay Anglican from Chimoio, Mozambique, said of Msosa, "He demeans our priests and bishops, yet they are the ones who put him where he is today. These are our fathers, husbands, and brothers. They tell us their challenges."

She added: "I appeal to the Communion leadership to come and restore sanity,

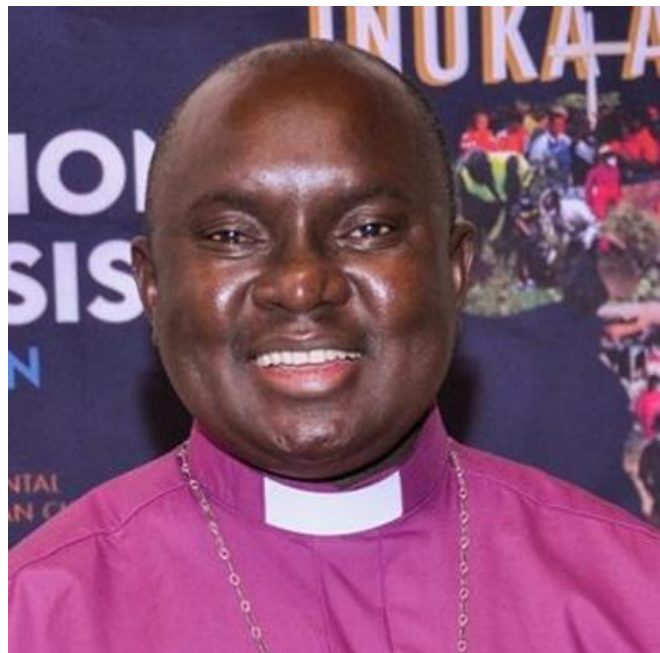
even if it means closing all the churches for a while. I will worship in my kitchen."

### **Rivalry and Accountability**

Archbishop Msosa claims that the church leaders who oppose him lack proper theological training and that their criticisms are rooted in disappointed ambition and a desire to resist financial accountability.

After detailing his academic achievements, which include two master's degrees and current study for a doctorate, he asked: "Which Anglican seminary did they attend? I suspect this may be a problem in how we understand the church."

Msosa added that he believed the conflict's roots lay in an earlier rivalry between himself and Ernesto, who were both candidates for an episcopal election in the Diocese of Niassa in 2017, and again for the church's primacy in 2024.



*Bishop  
Manuel  
Ernesto*

"Bishop Ernesto hoped to become diocesan Bishop of Niassa, but he lost it to me. He was not elected, and it brought pain to him," Msosa said, adding that Ernesto's loss in the primatial election "brought another pain. He had wounds from Niassa, and now he lost again."

Ernesto said the differences in the current conflict "are not personal and I do not hold any grudge."

"Our differences are about integrity in ministry and faithfulness to Anglican governing proceedings that are being compromised at the risk of credibility and stability of the church. ... Many are saying this is not acceptable in a church of the caliber of our beloved Anglican church."

Msosa also said that he had received reports in May from an auditor about mismanagement of funds in the Diocese

of Nampula, information that he passed along to the Anglican Communion Office. The auditor had recommended a forensic audit of the diocese's accounts.

"I shared the same with the provincial chancellor, asking him and his team to get in touch with the Bishop of Nampula to understand what is happening," Msosa said. "But Bishop [Ernesto] wrote a very bad email attacking me."

Ernesto explained that the audit report only flagged some accounting irregularities that needed to be corrected. "Our diocesan financial position is in good order and can be verified," he told TLC.

A representative of the Anglican Communion Office in London told TLC that it has not been asked to help settle the dispute.

### **QUIZ QUESTION 5:**

**What in the world are Magi?**

- A.** Eastern kings
- B.** Bankers
- C.** Astrologers
- D.** school teachers

## **QUIZ ANSWERS:**

The following quiz questions come from the [Baptist Press "A Christmas Quiz."](#)

**Question 1:** What animals were present at Jesus' birth?

**Answer: D.** Who knows?

The Bible doesn't say anything about animals being present

**Question 2:** When Mary became pregnant,

**Answer: D.** both b (Joseph wanted to dissolve their relationship) and c (Mary left Nazareth for a while).

See Matthew 1:19; Luke 1:39,56

**Question 3:** Just what is a heavenly host?

**Answer: C.** an array of angels

**Question 4:** What is a manger anyway?

**Answer: C.** a feeding trough

A trough or an open box in which feed for livestock is placed

**Question 5:** What in the world are Magi?

**Answer: C.** astrologers

astrologers who dabbled in the natural sciences

# **ST. MARY THE VIRGIN EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

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## **PARISH STAFF**

**Rector:** Fr. Christopher Simpson

**Treasurer:** Sherri Anthony

**Secretary:** Bailey Saffle

**Organist:** Jeanette Swain

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## **VESTRY**

Sr. Warden: Bob Miller

Jr. Warden: Bryan Beal

Members:

Jeri Stockton, John Moody,

Jocelyn Carrillo, Lyndell Moody.

## **MISSION**

Reaching out in Christ's love to our community and all God's creation  
through faith, worship, and service.