



Ad Clerum

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EPISCOPAL VISIT TO INDIA

Dearly beloved Brethren in Christ, greetings.

Having now safely returned to South Africa after our recent episcopal journey to India, I wished to write to you to share something of that experience, and to thank you most sincerely for your prayers which accompanied the mission from beginning to end. I was deeply conscious throughout the journey that I did not travel alone, but carried with me the prayers and goodwill of the Church here in Southern Africa.

The visit, undertaken between 26 February and 3 March 2026 under the authority of the Primate of the Traditional Anglican Church (TAC), Archbishop Shane B. Janzen, and on the permission granted by our Metropolitan, Archbishop Michael H. Gill, had as its principal purpose the consecration of two bishops to the Holy Episcopate for the Anglican Church of India (ACI-TAC). It was therefore both a solemn ecclesiastical duty and a profound privilege to participate in so important a moment in the life of the Church.

After departing South Africa, I arrived in New Delhi following travel through the Middle East. There, myself and Bishop Craig Botterill (who journeyed all the way from Canada) were warmly received by Archbishop Samuel P. Prakash (Metropolitan of the ACI-TAC), Bishop-elect John Ashish Prakash, Mrs Madhulika Joyce Khanna (Diocesan Secretary) and members of the diocesan leadership.



Bishops Craig and Stephen meeting with Archbishop Samuel P. Prakash at the ACI-TAC Diocesan Offices

From the outset one was struck by the warmth of their welcome and the sincerity of their Christian fellowship. Though separated by distance, geography, culture, and language, we quickly discovered that the bonds of Christ and the shared heritage of Anglican faith unite us deeply.



During the days that followed we met with clergy and church leaders, visited diocesan offices, and spoke at length about the life and future of the Church in India. It was both encouraging and humbling to witness the devotion of those who labour for the Gospel under circumstances different from our own. Their faith is vibrant, their commitment sincere, and their desire to remain within the fellowship of the historic Anglican tradition was evident throughout.



Bishop Craig and Bishop Stephen in India

One of the most memorable parts of the journey was the long road trip from New Delhi northward into the Punjab region. The landscape gradually gave way to rural villages and fields, and one was reminded that Christianity in India lives not only in great cities but also in smaller communities where the Church quietly continues her mission of prayer, worship, and witness.



Traveling by road in India is “organised chaos” with constant hooting. Being driven by Bishop-elect Prakash

Our destination was the parish of St Luke in the city of Jalandhar, where the consecration of the two bishops-elect was to take place.



After a 9-hour journey, we arrived at St Luke’s in the cantonment at Jalandhar. Being met and welcomed by Bishop-elect Sunil and members of the parish.

The consecration took place on Sunday, 1 March. The entire day was deeply moving. Together with Archbishop Samuel Prakash and Bishop Craig Botterill, I had the honour of participating in the service as well as the laying on of hands as the Church prayed for and set apart these men for the sacred office of the episcopate.



Bishops-elect Prakash and Sunil signing their Oaths of Allegiance



The Procession of Clergy forming up

Such moments remind us of the remarkable continuity of the apostolic Church. Through the laying on of hands—an act reaching back through centuries of Christian history—the ministry entrusted by Christ Jesus to His apostles continues to be handed on in faithful succession.



Processing into the Church

The congregation present that day reflected the vibrancy of the local Christian community. Their joy and reverence were evident throughout the service, and their participation testified to a living faith that continues to stand in that land.



Chrismation during the Consecration

To stand as preacher and co-consecrator in that place was to feel the living continuity of the apostolic faith across continents and centuries—in an ancient land where the Gospel has long taken root.





Two new Bishops for India: Bishop John Ashish Prakash and Bishop Sunil Kumar



Beyond the consecration itself, the visit allowed for several pastoral encounters that remain especially meaningful. We were welcomed into private homes for prayer and fellowship, blessed households, and visited members of the Church who were ill. On one occasion we prayed with the wife of one of the newly consecrated bishops who was unwell, entrusting her to the healing mercy of God.



Such moments—quiet, pastoral, and deeply human—often reveal the true heart of the Church’s life. For it is not only in our great liturgical events that Christ Jesus is present among His people, but also in homes and everyday gatherings where Christians pray together and lovingly bear one another’s burdens.

Further travels took us to Chandigarh, to a retreat centre property, now in need of restoration, yet holding promise as a future place of spiritual renewal, perhaps even a seminary for the training of faithful priests.





We also had the opportunity to visit several church communities in different regions/dioceses. In Saharanpur, we rejoiced with the congregation of St Thomas in the Diocese of Lucknow.



Down in the town of Karnal, we saw the generous sharing of a Methodist building by our ACI-TAC brethren for their worship.



The Methodist Church shared with the ACI-TAC.

Throughout the journey I was struck again and again by the hospitality extended to us. The clergy and faithful received us with extraordinary kindness and generosity. Their warmth of spirit and sincere faith will remain with us for a long time to come.

At the same time, the visit provided an opportunity for careful reflection about the life and worship of the Church in that context. As is often the case in mission environments, the local expression of church life has been shaped by a variety of influences. While the devotion of the congregations is evident and encouraging, there is also a clear desire among many clergy for deeper formation in the historic Anglican liturgical and sacramental tradition.

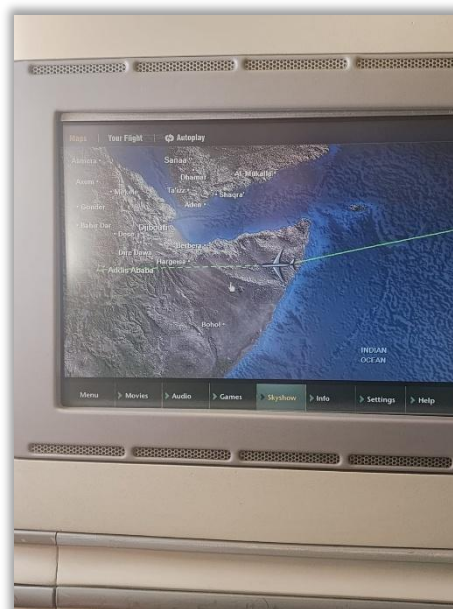
This presents an opportunity: an opportunity for teaching, for mutual learning, and for strengthening the shared identity of the Church across cultures and continents. The Anglican tradition, with its balance of Scripture, sacrament, and ordered worship, through the Book of Common Prayer, remains a precious inheritance which must continually be nurtured and transmitted.



The consecration of the new bishops is therefore an important step in strengthening pastoral leadership and ecclesiastical order within the Church in India. With faithful oversight and continued cooperation within the wider fellowship of the TAC, there is every reason to hope that the Church there will grow in unity, reverence, and their catholic and apostolic witness.



The journey home, however, proved somewhat more complicated than the journey out. Due to developments associated with the volatile situation and war in the Middle East, the original return route was unexpectedly disrupted, requiring a rapid rearrangement of flights. Eventually I managed to return via Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, arriving safely in Johannesburg before completing the final leg back to Cape Town.



Flying to Ethiopia from India

Once again, I am deeply grateful for the prayers that surrounded this journey. Travel in our present age can sometimes remind us how fragile human plans can be. Yet throughout it all the Lord preserved the way and granted a safe return.

Looking back upon the visit as a whole, I can say without hesitation that it was a beautiful and memorable mission. To see the Anglican faith alive in another part of the world—to meet believers who share our love for Christ, our reverence for Holy Scripture, and our commitment to the Gospel and the Church’s apostolic life—is both encouraging and deeply moving.

The Church of Jesus Christ is far larger than any one country or culture. She stretches across continents and centuries, united not by human institutions alone but by the grace of God, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the sacramental life of the Body of Christ.



Bishop Stephen and Craig in India

May the Lord who sends His servants into the harvest field continue to guide and strengthen His Church, both here in Southern Africa and throughout the world.

Yours in the service of Christ and His Church,

†Stephen