

Why Do We Need an SGM?

A Motivational Letter for a Special General Meeting of the OD Union

Dear OD community,

On 3rd September, we made a [call for a Special General Meeting \(SGM\)](#) of the OD Union. In this motivational letter, we respond to potential questions you may have on this matter.

1. I haven't been following all this. What's going on and why should I care?

There is an ongoing and successful mobilisation of right-wing Bishops ODs, which has resulted in regressive and malicious agendas being pursued by some members of the current OD Committee and various aligned ODs in their individual capacities. Amongst these agendas, the Committee resisted the flying of the Pride Flag at the School, resisted the hosting of Iftar at the School, intervened in a School staffing matter, and litigated against a settlement on the Bishops Rhodes Scholarship that the School had already accepted. In addition to the harm to people caused by these agendas, they also risked significant reputational and financial harm to the School and the ODU.

In response, an informal grouping called *Supporting a Progressive Bishops* emerged. The group brings together ODs, parents, staff, and friends who want to see Bishops thrive as a force for good in South African society. You may find out more at the group's webpage: <https://progressivebishops.org/>.

The co-facilitators and delegates of *Progressive Bishops* have gone to great lengths to engage with the OD Committee on a constructive basis (see Question 3 below), but unfortunately, those negotiations were unsuccessful. Therefore, it is with regret that we are calling for an SGM.

At that SGM, we would urge ODs to resolve that:

1. *The OD Committee no longer holds a current mandate, and*
2. *A mandate can only be restored through full fresh elections.*

2. What are the main issues that prompted the call for an SGM?

There are three main issues that prompted our call for an SGM:

Firstly, *the OD Committee refused to sign their Statement of Intention*. The Statement is a document they themselves drafted; [the unsigned Statement is here](#). It committed the Committee to fresh elections for every seat, concluded at the 2027 AGM, by worldwide electronic ballot under independent returning officers. The Committee now says "elections will take place at the AGM." Without the Statement, that means an ordinary AGM, without vital electoral integrity stipulations. Without the Statement, the "Constitutional Subcommittee" that the Committee unilaterally established would be without crucial

safeguards; those safeguards included that the Committee would support full elections at the AGM and step down by the AGM if necessary to ensure that they could occur. The Committee asked us to release the email chain on this matter; [you can find it here](#).

Secondly, *the OD Committee has refused to provide interim reassurances*. The ODU needs to return back to basics - to focus on bringing us together as ODs, and supporting the growth of the School. Though some members of the Committee are doing that, the Committee as a whole is stretching beyond its mandate in its interventions in the governance of the School (see Question 5 below). Despite the outcry from the broader Bishops community regarding these interventions, the Committee has shown no willingness to give reassurances about staying within their constitutional mandate between now and the 2027 AGM.

Thirdly, *we have a mandate from the Progressive Bishops community*. On 27 July, 63% of the community voted in favour of “invite the OD Committee to hold full fresh elections now; SGM only if they refuse.” On 27 August, following our extensive negotiations with the Committee, we approached the community again for a compromise mandate, and 73% voted in favour of “work within the new structures to deliver fresh elections at the 2027 AGM; no SGM for now.” As mentioned above, the Committee refused to sign the Statement of Intention - the basis on which the vast majority of the *Progressive Bishops* community voted to defer an SGM and work within the structures. Essentially, the community voted to work within a framework to which the Committee has since declined to commit.

3. Why don't you try to talk it out with the OD Committee?

We have gone to great lengths to engage with the OD Committee on a constructive basis. We have had countless email and WhatsApp exchanges, numerous phone calls, a three-hour mediated meeting on 4th August, and five iterations of a compromise document (the still-unsigned Statement of Intention). Our extensive, good faith negotiations have, unfortunately, produced little tangible results.

We gave the OD Committee every opportunity to honour their own commitments. Even when the media approached us for comment after the 4th August meeting, [we declined to comment](#) to honour the outcomes of that meeting in good faith. In the end, they were unwilling to fulfil their promise of fresh elections, and unwilling to adopt interim measures.

At this point, we are genuinely not sure what else we could do. The Statement of Intention was written by the OD Committee in response to the outcomes from the mediated meeting, as a compromise solution to avoid an SGM, and yet the Committee was not willing to sign *its own document*. We even went the extra mile of polling the *Progressive Bishops* community again to see if the community would accept a compromise solution, only to find that the Committee was not acting in good faith.

It is not clear to us that further talks with the OD Committee are worthwhile. The talks thus far have demonstrated that the Committee is unwilling to keep to the assurances it gives us.

We couldn't have confidence that the commitments made in further talks - whether verbally or in writing - would actually be followed.

4. An SGM is divisive. Won't this divide the community further?

No-one wants an SGM. SGMs are divisive and should be a last resort. *We show above just how much time and effort we have given to try to avoid an SGM.* Unfortunately, that proved unsuccessful, and we are at a point where we need to use the last-resort option.

It's worth noting that the community is *already* divided, and this division was driven primarily by the actions and words of the OD Committee. The principal mechanism by which the Committee has driven this division is through the "Bishops Stakeholders Action Group" WhatsApp group. Members of the Committee have frequently posted inflammatory, bigoted, and misleading rhetoric in that group, while tolerating, as admins of that group, similar rhetoric from other individuals. We have analysed the message record of that group in detail in our submission to the Investigative Review (see Question 6 below), and shared that submission with all OD members of the *Progressive Bishops* community.

5. Has the OD Committee acted within its mandate?

The objects of the ODU are set out in Clause 3 of the ODU Constitution. *Nothing in the Constitution gives the ODU any role in the governance of the School.* That is not only our reading; the previous OD Committee resolved, on advice of counsel, that resolutions dealing with Bishops Council matters are *ultra vires* under the ODU Constitution.

We know that the current OD Committee recognises this too. If they believed intervention in the School's governance were within their current powers, they would not have sought an amendment to the ODU Constitution at the AGM earlier this year. At that AGM, the Committee sought the insertion of a new object for the ODU - to "collaborate with the Diocesan College Council in an effort to be a medium for the advancement of Bishops." This did not pass at the AGM; it was referred back to the Committee by the ODU President.

There is another important clause in the Constitution, Clause 4.2: "The Union's activities shall be in furtherance of the objects and not for specific benefit of an individual member or a group of members". The ODU is meant to represent *all* ODs, yet members of the OD Committee created and continue to administer the "Bishops Stakeholders Action Group." Additionally, a member of the OD Committee created and operated an anonymous, public website, the *United Bishops* site, opposing "cause flags" at the School. That site copied material elements from the *Progressive Bishops* site. By creating that site, he promoted the interests of a particular group of ODs, thereby violating Clause 4.2 of the ODU Constitution.

6. Why don't we wait for the outcome of the OD Committee's "Investigative Review"?

On 21st August, the OD Committee unilaterally established an “Investigative Review” to investigate allegations and concerns raised publicly regarding the Committee. We made a submission to the Review and shared that submission with all OD members of the *Progressive Bishops* community. We hope for a positive outcome from the Review.

Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe that *any* outcome from the Review would be worth waiting for, because *the Review has no teeth*. There are no stipulations as to what would happen if the Review *did* find that the public allegations against the OD Committee hold up.

Additionally, we intentionally do not use the word “independent” to describe this Investigative Review. If the Review were independent, the Committee would not be nominating the Reviewer. If the Review were independent, the Committee would not be setting the terms of reference. In essence, the Committee is choosing the judge and setting the rules for its own trial.

7. What’s the ideal outcome from the SGM?

The ideal outcome is fresh elections to restore a mandate in the OD Committee. We hope that the new leadership elected - whomever they are - strive to return the ODU back to basics - to focus on bringing us together as ODs, and supporting the growth of the School. We encourage all ODs to consider running for election to the Committee, in the event that the SGM resolutions pass.

8. What happens next? What can I do?

We are approaching ODs to gather requisitioners for the SGM. If you support the call for an SGM, please sign on to be a requisitioner. We would like as many ODs as possible to join.

Once we have submitted the requisition, the OD Committee is bound to convene the SGM (Clause 6.3.1, ODU Constitution). The Constitution requires at least 14 days notice of the meeting (Clause 6.4) but sets no outer limit, so we will ask the Committee to issue notice within 14 days of the requisition and to hold the SGM within four weeks of the notice being given. The Committee will communicate the details of the SGM, and we will keep you posted.

Once the SGM is scheduled, the best thing you can do is show up and vote on the resolutions. You can also share word of the SGM with any other ODs you know, encouraging them to show up and vote. We have asked that ODs be able to attend and vote online as well as in person, as at the SGM of February 2026 (Clause 6.8).

-

Overall, we hope this motivational letter makes it clear: we need an SGM, and we need it as soon as possible.

Don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Yours Faithfully,

Daniel Tate & Joseph Raimondo

Co-Facilitators

Supporting a Progressive Bishops

September 2026