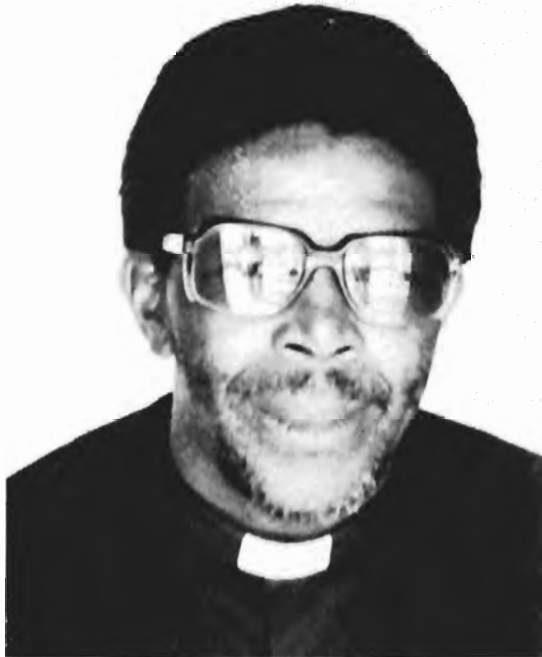


The Revd Victor Vivian Siphon Africander (1930–1990)

The assassination of the Revd Victor Vivian Siphon Africander on Friday 4 May 1990 at 7:30, sent waves of shock and disbelief around the Pietermaritzburg community. He was gunned down at point-blank range in Sutherland Road, not very far from his home and St Mark's Church where he was a priest, while he was taking his niece's six-year-old daughter, Thandekile Kumalo, to school. He had stopped at an intersection when the assassin shot him in the head and chest, and the bullet also grazed Thandekile above her right ear.

The Revd Victor Africander was born on 7 February 1930 in Mahlabathini (near Ulundi). He received his primary education in Nkonjeni, St Francis and Entumeni Schools, and for high school education he went to Hlophenkulu School in Nongoma. He started his career as a teacher at Estcourt after a teacher training course at Evangelical Teacher Training College, popularly known as ETTC. His teaching career lasted for only two years. True to the adage, *Ukhamba lufuza imbiza* (a chip off the old block), he went to train at St Peter's, Rosettenville. This was inevitable when one looks at the family history.

Victor Africander was the great grandson of Joe Africander, a black American ex-slave who came to South Africa with the Revd Robertson, a



Victor Africander

(Photograph: Africander Family)

missionary. They were instrumental in establishing a mission station at Mahlabathini. One of Joe Africander's three sons, William was the first black to be ordained as a deacon; Samuel, Revd Victor's grandfather was a catechist, and his father, Joshua, was a priest.

After serving as a priest in different places including Eshowe, Utrecht and Swaziland, he finally settled in Pietermaritzburg in 1975 where he served for a year in Edendale in the St Martin's parish, and later moved to St Mark's in Imbali in 1976 where he remained until he met with his untimely death.

The Revd Africander was widely admired for his peacemaking efforts during the height of violence in Pietermaritzburg district. He was dearly loved in the community because of his outgoing nature. He ministered to all irrespective of denomination. His house was a home to many a needy and homeless person. He will always be remembered for his courage in burying the dead of whatever political or religious affiliation under whatever circumstances — at the height of political violence in Imbali, there were times when it meant a lot of personal sacrifice for any minister to conduct a funeral service. Because of his profound love and concern for the poor, the needy and the dead, he was known to be the saint of the gutters.

The Revd Africander served as Chairman of the Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches which is part of the South African Council of Churches. This Council works through the Dependents' Conference which is a compassionate ministry to the families of political prisoners and detainees; through Justice and Reconciliation, which focuses on justice and human rights by facilitating church discussions on local political and economic issues; and through Inter-Church Aid, which co-ordinates and encourages people's initiated self-help development projects and programmes.

As a chaplain for the Mothers Union Guild of the Diocese of Natal, he was a pillar of strength, and a source of inspiration because of his never-failing interest in the activities of the Guild. He generously gave his time and was the Guild's guiding star.

A devoted husband and father, he will always be dearly missed by his wife, Thandekile Constance (b. Mashaba) whom he married in Ladysmith in 1958, a sister tutor at the Edendale Hospital Nursing College, their two daughters, Gloria and Carol, and their son Anthony.

His gruesome death was as unbelievable as it was senseless. The Anglican Bishop of Natal, Bishop Michael Nuttall, had this to say when he heard about the Revd Africander's death, 'As a bishop and friend, I find myself without words. We are all obviously deeply shocked about what happened. This has brought very close to me the suffering which so many people have been experiencing through the violence.' He hoped that the Revd Africander's 'terrible and unnecessary death may be used somehow to bring healing and peace with justice into this wounded and broken community.'

MABONGI MTSHALI

