



BISHOPS' CHARGE TO THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTY FOURTH SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

Introduction

Warm greetings to you all as we gather in this very special and important place in the bicentennial year of our Church. This is the first occasion for a very long time that the Synod of the Diocese has met outside of Auckland. That is a good thing in any case but especially so as we mark 200 years since Gospel beginnings in this land. We look forward to the opportunity to make pilgrimage with you to the Marsden Cross site. It will be there in Christmas week of this year that two important gatherings will occur. They will not only celebrate the anniversary of that first Christmas day service, but also the partnership between Ruatara and Marsden that allowed it to happen.

We are glad that this Synod allows us to have an active engagement with our sisters and brothers from Tai Tokerau both in our pilgrimage to Oihi and in meal and conversation together on Friday evening. We are very grateful for Pihopa Te Kitohi Pikaahu presence with us tonight and for his kauwhau in our Eucharist. The focus of our Synod this year is very much on our engagement in God's mission. This setting, the anniversary ahead and the presence of Tikanga Maori amongst us are all pointers to our future which continues to be about being a people in mission.

As we gather tonight we are also conscious that it is the fourth anniversary of the first Christchurch earthquake. Some will remember that we were gathered in Synod in 2010 when we heard the news of that quake. The Christchurch Synod was also gathered that weekend and so they are again over the same days as us. We have sent greetings to Bishop Victoria wishing the Synod well for their gathering and recalling especially this anniversary.

In Memoriam

The Very Reverend Lynda Patterson died suddenly in July. During her time at St John's she served as a College Deacon in the Parish of St Thomas, Tamaki.

Kenneth (Ken) Aickin died in July. Ken was a Synod rep All Saints Ponsonby and a hard worker in the parish.

The Reverend Dick Fenton died in June aged 97. Dick's whole ministry was in parishes in this Diocese and spanned 74 years of ordained service.

Alan Wood died in June. He was a long-standing parishioner at St Chad's Meadowbank and served as a Synod rep.

Claire Mitchell died in February. She was Administrator for the Te Atatu Local Shared Ministry and a Synod Rep for some years.

Gordon Johns died in January. Gordon was a Synod Rep for St Margaret's Hillsborough in the 1970s-80s and was a member of the Stipends & Pensions Committee for a number of years.

Meg Brown died in January. Meg was a Synod Rep for the Mangonui Mission District.

Tonight we also wish to remember Audrey Hardcastle. Audrey has been a long standing member of the Parishes of St Andrew's Epsom and latterly St Margaret's Hillsborough. She was one of the intercessors for the Synod over the years. Audrey is the mother of Ian Hardcastle, Vicar of Whangaparaoa and the grandmother of Matthew Ockleston, the Deputy Chancellor. Audrey died peacefully in her sleep last week, aged 90.

Let us pause for a moment in silence as we offer thanks to God for these people, and for their service to our Synod.

May they rest in peace, and rise in glory.

The Year in Review

There have been many highlights in our ministry through the past year. During 2013 we were aware of the large number of vacancies in parishes that were emerging and we wondered how we would fill them all. We are excited that we have been able to do so and to appoint really good people to positions. Among those appointments we have welcomed a number of new clergy to the Diocese for whom this is their first Auckland Synod. We welcome them as new members of Synod and invite them along with others who come to the Synod for the first time to stand so we can welcome you.

The progress made on the Cathedral project has been a very exciting development. We will hear an update from the Cathedral team during the Synod. Just in this past week the bridge removal has been completed with all the scaffolding now dismantled, and the impact of the building in this new form is overwhelmingly good. The Cathedral has hosted a number of important occasions once again. In particular we note the memorial service held last year following the death of Nelson

Mandela. Most recently the Archbishop of Canterbury visited the Cathedral and blessed the foundation stone for the new chapel.

We have been able to observe ministry in many places around the Diocese and continue to be humbled by the commitment of people in ministry units both big and small as they not only keep their places of worship functioning well, but also play their part in the ongoing mission of God in the wider community.

We both consider Confirmation a real highlight of our episcopal ministry. What we would observe is that it is often a highlight in the life of the congregation as members make a deep commitment to being disciples of Christ. We would also observe that Confirmation is often (not always) a sign that the ministry in that place has a genuine focus on growing disciples, education for ministry, and building up the body of Christ.

We were present at the launch of some of the research findings from the City Missions families 100 project. The publication of 'Speaking for Ourselves' gives insights into the experience of poverty from those who live in that situation. It makes sobering reading. These findings are shaping the Mission's work with clients into the future. We are glad to report that the Mission is in good heart with a sound Board leading it well.

We celebrated with the people of Tai Tokerau when we formally handed over the church and hall at St Paul's Kamo to be a ministry base and place of worship for them in Whangarei. Our Episcopal Team and Bishop Kito's team have gathered together for worship and conversation on a couple of occasions during the year as we develop and maintain our partner relationship.

In the middle of the year we saw the departure of The Reverend Charlie Hughes from ministry due to his decision not to be able to support the General Synod Motion 30 on the way ahead for same sex relationships within the Church. We regret that Charlie was unable to stay to see what structures might emerge for holding our diversity together. We are grateful for the many people in the Parish of Henderson who have continued to commit themselves to the work of that parish. We are grateful for the patience and forbearance of the people of our Church while this work continues. The diversity which Motion 30 seeks to manage is consistent with the place where both your Bishops have pointed the Diocese in our discussions over these past years. We recognise the challenges of this for people across the spectrum of views on this matter. We continue to be willing to meet with those who wish to discuss this with us.

The Election

Much of the current debate leading up to the election has focussed on the unpleasant side of politics, on personalities and scandal. Our country needs leaders of good character. We hope that Christian people and all New Zealanders will be able to discern where such leadership lies in our political life. Our attention needs to be on the many issues that face our nation so that we can each decide who might best be responsive in bringing about real solutions. In recent years the Churches have drawn attention to some critical areas of social need. In particular we continue to see that child

poverty, wealth and income disparities, and housing create significant challenges for the building of a just and equitable society.

Mission and Ministry in the Diocese

As we have already noted this Synod offers us the opportunity to focus on and commit ourselves to a renewed life of mission. We have also spoken of the many positive signs in the worshipping communities of the Diocese where people are making big commitments to providing effective ministry. Over the last few years this Synod has sought to identify various priorities for work in the Diocese. This has led to the formation of a new Mission and Ministry Oversight Group to give synergy and leadership to this work on behalf of Diocesan Council. We acknowledge that this group has had a long gestation but we're glad that it has now formed and is getting underway. Its focus will be on the oversight of work to help the Diocese ensure that it is attending to the breadth of mission across the five marks enshrined in our Constitution. It will also work to ensure that the particular priorities for the Diocese are receiving attention.

For some time we have been aware that a missing element in mission resourcing has been the proclamation of the Gospel message. We all know that Anglicans are by nature good at living out their faith and demonstrating the love of God in mission. However, we are not always that good at talking the walk. We need to regain the confidence to be able to tell of the hope that is within us and to point to our faith in Christ as the source of the love that motivates us. This is about initiating and responding to faith conversations with others and emerges from the relationships we have with other people. We certainly want to see the Church grow, but sharing our faith with others is most importantly about talking about things that are vital and life giving for us.

The Challenges for 'Us'

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12: 12, 13)

At this Synod we will embrace the Decade for Mission that was launched at the General Synod by our Archbishops. This will, once again, place before us the challenge of being a people set for mission and, by the grace of God, be energized anew for the joys and responsibilities of discipleship. How we approach this and, indeed, how we approach all the challenges of being church assumes a "we" or and "us." But how is it that we are a "we"?

We are a Diocesan Church but we are more often simply a collection of congregations that, frankly, can apparently take or leave our belonging to one another. As we turn 200 years old there is no doubt that we face some significant challenges as a Diocese but it seems to us that the first challenge is our understanding of ourselves as a "we." How can we be in mission and ministry together if we are essentially congregations that are islands unto ourselves with little or no understanding of each other?

The greater Auckland region is facing massive demographic growth. In every single direction, whether it be to the East, South, West, North, there are houses and suburbs springing up and the promise is that there are thousands more to come. We have little or no presence in some of these places. We have the likes of Massey Parish, keen to respond to the fact that 20,000 new residents (that is as many as in an average parish) have moved out in that area, want to build a new church. The Diocese has only the very limited means to respond to their \$500,000 dollar request to assist them.

How do “we” do something together to respond to this growth? If we were to resource the Massey project or any other, how would we do that? Is the answer that the local people do it all themselves?

It is possible to argue that in recent decades the Diocese has embraced its own version of ‘Rogernomics.’ The ‘free market approach’ has been such that if a particular Anglican Church faced challenges then it is largely up to them to solve them. If they can’t make ‘their little bit of the vineyard pay its way,’ then the Diocesan Office has told them that might be terribly sad but that as a Diocese we have no real ways, particularly material and monetary ways, of supporting them.¹ This approach has hurt rural parts of the Diocese harder than it has hit urban parts of the Diocese but there is question that in a rapidly changing world we are failing in metropolitan Auckland too. If one were to look at a map though, we are shrinking back to the centre (and the sharp minded will note that our centre is with a very particular social demographic). Overall, the “you sink or swim on your own” has meant that people have been very innovative and worked incredibly hard to “save themselves,” but many good Anglican folk question how much time and effort is spent on keeping the roof over our head and the show on the road versus the time and effort spent on discipleship and mission in the world.

There is much more that could be said describing and analysing our challenges and our successes, but here is not the place to do that.

The prior question to much of what we hope to do and be in ministry is: is this about “us”? In other words, are these things “we” want to face *together*? – both the joys and the challenges. Fundamentally this is about Diocesan identity. We have to build a sense of Diocesan identity and belonging if there is to be a “we” to respond together.

Indaba

And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ... in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ Acts 2: 8, 11

¹ This is not entirely true. The Diocese has supported the likes of the East Tamaki Mission Venture, it has also supported some significant building projects such as at Birkdale and Whangaparoa. But resources have been severely limited since the Global Financial Crisis and a drop in return in the various Diocesan investments. It is worth noting that in these cases “we” are not supporting this work, “we” are living off our forebears good judgement and generosity.

*Indaba*² is a Zulu word that really came into the Anglican lexicon during and after the Lambeth Conference of 2008. *Indaba* is a community process in which important issues are discussed in such a way as the life of the community will be maintained and grow. The Anglican website *Continuing Indaba* tells us that:

While the word *Indaba* is a Zulu word, the concept exists in many other places and cultures. For example, a similar meeting concept is called *Imbizo* by the Xhosa peoples of south-east South Africa and *Baraza* in the Swahili culture of East Africa. These three methods/concepts are not exactly alike, nor are any of the many other similar ideas in Africa and Asia, because the culture in which they arose has shaped them. *Indaba* has to be adjusted to the culture it is to be used within. It's a slippery thing; *Indaba* is a philosophy, if you like, about how people in a community relate to one another around problems and disagreements that may divide the community—not a set of steps to be followed in order to come to a concrete “fix” at the end.³

As Archbishop Rowan Williams has observed, these processes have long been part of the tradition of the wider church, especially among the Benedictines and the Quakers.

The aim of *Indaba* was and is to enable Anglicans worldwide to live into their belonging in Christ in a deeper way while, at the same time, face honestly difficult points of difference and conflict. It has enabled mutual listening and learning while providing a way to recognize (and even celebrate) the diversity that exists in the Anglican Church.

The Most Reverend Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town writes:

Indaba is a Zulu word for gathering for purposeful discussion. It is a process and a method of engagement as we listen to one another concerning the challenges that face our community, and by extension the Anglican Communion.⁴

What we have decided to do is adapt the *Continuing Indaba* process for our own Diocese so that we can listen to one another, learn about each other, and celebrate who we are. We hope that we can come to some deeper understanding of our connection and belonging with one another in Christ and, perhaps, understand the challenges that we face together.

While the original genesis of the *Indaba* process was to enable members of the Communion (at Lambeth 1998 and beyond) to deal with conflict we see no particular point of conflict that will be the

² *Indaba* process enables people to hear the personal dimension to the challenges in an immediate way that is sometimes lost in more academic analysis. If one were inclined to enquire further there is a vast amount of material in circulation. The recent report by the Church of England, *Anecdote to Evidence* offers some useful insights (we are awaiting the full report and analysis). The book *Seven Marks of a Healthy Church*, Robert Warren is also a worthwhile book for Vestries and other leadership groups to study.

³ <http://continuingindaba.com/2013/11/25/theological-reflection-what-is-continuing-indaba/> - accessed 29/8/14

⁴ <http://continuingindaba.com/2013/09/18/essence-of-indaba/>

focus of our Indaba. We are confident that the process or model is flexible enough for us to use it to simply gain a fuller understanding of “us” as a Diocese. As the Continuing Indaba website observes: “*Indaba* is a way of being the Body of Christ that places a priority a priority on relationships, empowers all and is oriented to mission, not the solution of issues.”⁵ We think this sounds perfect for us that this point in our history.

Right now is the time for *Indaba*. What we will learn about each other can and will inform how we respond to some important strategic decisions. We hope that your Ministry Unit will engage enthusiastically.

Diocesan Indaba in outline

We will send out comprehensive material that will describe the process by 1 October this year but in outline this is what we propose:

- Every Ministry Unit will be partnered with two other Ministry Units thus forming a triad. We will select the triads in order that we can ensure a good mixing of the diversity of the Diocese.
- Each Unit is to select 5 people from their Unit to represent them. Where there is a Vicar, this person should be one of the five. It is useful to have others who are part of the leadership of the Unit. Because we are interested on the future mission and identity of our church, where possible we think it entirely desirable for someone under 20 to be one of the five.
- In the first part of next year – preferably in Lent – each Ministry Unit Team will go and visit the others. [Teams A and B will visit Team C; then Teams B and C will visit Team A; then Teams C and A will visit Team B.]
- The Visit will begin later on Saturday afternoon with short gathering worship, and the hosts introducing some aspects of their mission and ministry in their context. Most of what happens in this time will be decided by the hosts.
- The evening is spent doing something relaxing and social. The expectation is that the hosting parish will billet their guests for the night. [We recognize that the ‘billeting’ of people may present the largest challenge to the whole idea. That said, we know that some of the richest gains in relationships will be found through sharing the ordinary hospitality of sharing dinner and breakfast table and the ordinary stuff of home life.]
- Sunday morning is taken up with joining the hosts at their regular worship. After worship and a time of fellowship there is an opportunity for a discussion before everyone returns to their homes.

⁵ <http://continuingindaba.com/resources/a-guide-to-continuing-indaba/continuing-indaba-leadership/>

This is not a small commitment by those who choose to be a part of it. We are, however, confident that it will be profoundly enriching experience for all those involved. The obvious aspect of this is that parishes are going to be without their Vicar to lead worship for two Sundays. We believe it is vitally important that the ordained leadership is part of the journey and we will provide worship resources so that lay leaders can lead worship 'back at home.' We urge you now to resist your Vicar's protestations that the parish cannot get by without them.

To recap, the purpose of this *Indaba* process is simply to see with our own eyes and hear with our own ears the Diocese of Auckland and through first hand experience come to understand our richness and our challenges as we set out into another two hundred years of mission.

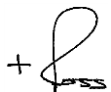
The process is not a programme. We have no pre-determined outcome. *Indaba* is made up of the simplest of ingredients – hospitality, joint bible study, worshipping together.

Finally, we will have regional meetings in the Easter/Pentecost season in order that we can hear what people have learned and what you think we bishops and the Mission and Ministry Oversight Committee should know as we look to the future.

To Conclude

We have said much, and we hope that you have gleaned from it that we look forward to a Synod where we can gather up all that has led us to this point from our heritage, and commit ourselves in fresh ways to being part of God's mission within the Diocese of Auckland and beyond.

May the Spirit of God guide us and challenge us during these days together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ross', with a small cross symbol to its left.

Bishop Ross Bay

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jim White', written in a cursive style.

Bishop Jim White

4th September 2014