



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

Greetings

It is good to be together as Synod once again. This is an important moment in our year, and is the key time when we can give visible expression to our diocesan life in all its vitality and diversity. We gather to speak and listen well together, held by the love of God and guided by the Holy Spirit of God.

We wish to acknowledge and welcome those who join this body for the first time. So if this is your first time as a member of the Auckland Synod, please stand so that we can greet you.

We trust that you will not feel as though you have landed on an alien planet as we make our way through our business with some of its inevitable quirks, and that you feel welcome among brothers and sisters in this diocesan family.

In memoriam

Please stand as we acknowledge the following people who have died in the past year and who were members of this Synod.

HOUSE OF CLERGY

The Reverend Des Olney

The Reverend Bob Hansen

The Reverend Richard Colegrove

The Reverend Murray Bean

The Reverend Murray Harford

The Reverend Pamela Warnes

The Reverend Bob Glen

The Reverend Mavis Ambler (Methodist Minister, South Hokianga Cooperating Parish)

The Reverend Nick Kirk

The Reverend Margaret Williams

HOUSE OF LAITY

Christina Tapu – Lay Canon of Holy Trinity Cathedral

Laraine Stevenson – Synod Rep St John’s East Tamaki

Lester Priest – Synod Rep for Maunu LSMU

Gloria Brewis - Synod Rep from Panmure

Captain Phil Clark – National Director Church Army

Mary Ann Ferrier – Lay Canon, Holy Trinity Cathedral

Dr Kevin Pope - Synod Rep for Pukekohe (latterly a parishioner at St Aidan’s, Remuera)

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord. And let light perpetual shine upon them.

May they rest in peace. And rise in glory.

An Election Year

It is unusual to be holding a Synod so close to a general election. We are glad that an early election date did not clash with the Synod as that may have created some legal constraint over what we could have moved and debated in the course of our business.

We know that Anglicans will vote from yellow to green, and all of the colours in between. We know better than to suggest what colour Anglicans should look like. But the elections matter because the future of our nation matters, and there are many things that capture the concern of each of us, and each Anglican around the Diocese.

We point you to the things that this Synod has discussed and debated in the years since the last election.

Along with the General Synod and many of the other churches, we have been consistent in our calls for the refugee quota to be increased to 1500 people per annum, and in our willingness to support the integration of refugees into our communities.

We have been constant in our concerns about housing, its affordability, the ongoing provision of state housing, the opportunity for social housing projects, and those who experience homelessness or inadequate housing.

We have grappled with issues around income inequality, the growing gap between rich and poor, the tragedy of child poverty, and the implementation of the living wage.

We have expressed our concerns about the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement. We have raised issues about climate change, especially in support of our neighbours in the Pacific.

We note that this Session of Synod returns to housing, inequality, the TPP Agreement, and climate change.

So as each Anglican prepares to vote, we will do so out of our political persuasion, our theological world-view, and from the matters of personal concern. We also encourage that Anglicans be

cognisant of the things that we have said as a Diocese are of importance and need change, and apply that in our decision-making as well.

God's World

There is much that can rise up to trouble us around the world, and we often find ourselves grateful for our relative isolation. But that should not make us complacent. Archbishop Winston Halapua is in the UK where he has addressed a number of groups about the urgency of rising sea levels and the risk represented to Pacific Island nations.

The growing military tensions between North Korea and the United States are a genuine cause for fear, taking our world back to Cold War times and the threat of nuclear conflict.

The many forgotten civil wars around the world, and the millions of displaced people and refugees that long for a home and for personal security should disturb us more than they often do.

We must take fresh confidence in the gospel message and the gospel task as we seek to be a people who (as our Confirmation promises challenge us) extend forgiveness, who love neighbour, who strive for peace and justice, and who give of self for the sake of following Christ.

Can we be that kind of Church?

Growing in our life and purpose as a Diocese

Last year we began to grasp a few nettles in our Synod discussions. They stem from some hard questions regarding what it means for there to be an "us" in our life as a diocese. What we want to be is a Diocese that has a genuine collegial, corporate belonging together. We desire to move beyond being a mere collection of local congregations, which we risk becoming. So we sought to ask the question of how we build that life so that "we" are best equipped to participate together in the *missio dei*, God's work in the world in which we participate.

We have been giving considerable thought to those matters through this last year. The challenges which we are beginning to attend to about quota, and church closures, and the use of capital funds, and so on, are not isolated and reactionary issues. They are issues that connect to our vision of the whole as to how we best harness the resources of the diocese to allow us to flourish and to be effective in the work of mission.

We have been in conversation with Diocesan Council about these things, and recently invited a group of lay and clergy to consult with us about them. We recognise that our ministry of *episcopus* is one of oversight. That carries with it the responsibilities of leading and caring and managing. But it also carries the sense of being given the opportunity to "see over" the whole, to have an overview of the diocese and thus the possibility of providing some vision for its future and direction.

One way of putting the challenge before us as bishops is: Where do we place ourselves between the two poles of complete independence and autonomy of the ministry units at one end, and complete direction and control of the Diocese over Ministry Units at the other end?

Working this out is never as easy as it may sound because, like it or not, in practice we are now more at one end of the pole than the other and are a collection of semi-autonomous, diverse communities of faith with different emphases, interests, theologies, and practices. And as such we do not take kindly to what we perceive as outside influences (such as bishops) making pronouncements about what we should be doing. So, we know that any vision for the diocese cannot be about the simplistic imposition of common programmes, common branding, common messaging, common answers. We are more complex than that.

Here, however, we see the brilliance of Anglican ecclesiology in the parish system (though we call different places by different names these days). The “parish” or as we call it, the Ministry Unit, is called to live out worship and mission in the local context, responding to the joys and sorrows, needs and gifts of each community. Thus we refer to the way in which as Anglicans we are not essentially a gathered church, setting ourselves up in a regional way and calling together people from all over the place who might like our style or who are people just like us. We know there is an element of that about who we are today, but in essence we remain committed to being present in local communities, gathering local people, meeting local needs, making the good news known locally. And just as the gospel is contextualised within cultures as a whole, we also adapt and respond to the particularities of local communities as we shape our life to be able to connect well to those communities.

So, while some predict the end of the parish model and even that the Anglican Church needs to completely reinvent itself, we think this prediction is wrong. We believe that, while local ministry will need to adapt and change in different ways, the deep theological underpinnings of the Incarnation that drives us to do God’s mission and ministry in a particular way and in a particular place, remains primary.

Because we believe that the mission of God is mostly worked out through local churches, and not in some big corporation style ‘diocesan way,’ it is our view that this local life must be strengthened and resourced to be able to fulfil its calling as a worshipping, mission-focussed people of God.

We have spoken about this over the years as seeing our task, as bishops and as an episcopal team, to be one of strengthening the life of the local church so that Anglican Christian church life flourishes, and through it the gospel impacts positively in the wider community. We wish to see local churches move increasingly from the majority of their energy being spent on ensuring their survival to a new confidence about giving their life away for the sake of the gospel and of the people we are called to serve.

In speaking about church growth, Bishop Richard Chartres reflected on his 25 years of episcopal ministry in London, and the ways in which the Diocese of London had developed and changed. He

noted that “the Christian community will continue to thrive as long as it is vision-led and not problem-led.”¹

We echo that view, and so to be clear our vision is: for a diocese made up of flourishing ministry units where what it means to flourish is about knowing the gift of God in Christ and sharing that gift with the same graciousness by which it comes to us.

Over the last couple of years we have been working on the question of what a wholly or healthy or flourishing community of Christians looks like in some greater detail. We know that there is variety in expression, and indeed, we should expect that, but we might wonder about features in common of flourishing communities – communities that are serving God and neighbour well, and are outward and visible signs of the life and love of God.

Of course we are not the first to consider what it is that makes for a healthy church. In recent years a great deal of work has occurred in this space. The two stand-out contributions are represented by the publications *Natural Church Development* by Christian Schwarz and *The Healthy Churches Handbook* by Robert Warren. We have studied this material (and more besides) but have been inclined to lean towards the *Healthy Churches* model for a number of reasons some of which are actually expressed in that book.

Time does not permit us to detail all that thinking here, but it is important that we underscore two points:

1. We are not just interested in numerical features of any particular community. To make use of the late Bishop Ted Buckle’s four modes, we are concerned about numerical, maturational, organic, and incarnational features of each community of faith’s life.²
2. We are not wanting to in any way suppress the appropriate variety of theological or liturgical expression in the various communities of faith in our Diocese – we believe that part of our strength and richness as a Diocese is found in our diversity. We are not wanting to impose a single kind of expression of mission and ministry.

What we ask ourselves as bishops and episcopal team is: How can we help local Anglican expressions of faith to flourish? We believe that God desires that flourishing to be first local and, at the same time, part of a larger Diocesan whole. Our work at “the centre” is fundamentally about doing all that

¹ Lambeth Lecture 2015

² Many of us will be familiar with Loren Mead’s book “More than numbers; the way churches grow,” and his lifting up of Bishop Ted’s categories or modes of growth. Just as the Marks of Mission present a holistic understanding of mission, these four present a more holistic understanding of growth:

Numerical growth – This is growth in the ways we ordinarily describe it: Sunday attendance, size of budget, and numbers of activities, primarily growth in numbers of active members;

Maturational growth – This growth is in stature and maturity of each member, growth in faith and in the ability to nurture and be nurtured;

Organic growth – This is growth of the congregation as a functioning community, able to maintain itself as a living organism, an institution that can engage the other institutions of society;

Incarnational growth – This is growth in the ability to take the meanings and values of the faith-story and make them real in the world and society outside the congregation. The congregation grows in its ability to enfold in the community what the faith is all about. p12-13

we can to strengthen each local place to be able to incarnate mission and ministry as faithfully and as effectively as they can.

So, for example, the Diocesan Youth Facilitator (and that whole ministry) is focused not on forcing a single response for every context nor on turning up and delivering a programme from the centre, but being alongside and enabling the ministry of each context. To be sure, there are some Diocesan Programmes (like BOLD and Grace Collective and E-Fest), but again the outcome we are looking for is the development of leadership and ministry for the various contexts and communities that the young people come from.

In the first instance, we have to understand the ways in which each ministry unit is functioning and flourishing, and then, when we understand that reasonably well, we can encourage and work alongside that community in order to “build up the body of Christ.”³ Once again, the Healthy Church work helped here since it has a number of “markers” of health and a questionnaire that enables a community to understand where they are in relation to them. What we found though, through trialling some of that material, is that we needed to develop it for our own context. This we did with workshops and with the help of some consultants. This is now being implemented through the new Ministry Unit Review, which Archdeacon Sarah Moss is leading out. Good initial progress is being made with this through the good work Sarah is doing in the ministry units where she has been involved so far.

Again, we will not set out all of the detail of that programme here. But the purpose of it is to work intentionally with each place to allow them to take a snapshot of their life, identify those things which work well for them, along with the areas of their life which are weak, and to discern where the fresh mission opportunities lie.

It is important for us to note here that local flourishing and mission activity are not linear or somehow separate things. It is not that we work on flourishing so that one day we might be able to undertake mission activity. Without mission, giving away of the life we have received through Christ, there is an absence of true flourishing in any Christian understanding of the word ‘flourishing.’ Part of flourishing is an attitude and activity that draws a community beyond itself to reach out to others. It is also important that you hear from us that we have, and are committed to, a vision that is about flourishing local communities caught up in worship and mission, for the love of God and neighbour.

Perhaps we can go back to some basics here. We believe that our life which begins and ends in the life and love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is not one which we live in isolation from one another. Instead we believe that we are in it together. As we affirm in the Eucharist:

E te whānau, we are the body of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, ko tātou te tinana o te Karaiti.

By one Spirit we were baptised into one body.

Nā te Wairua kotahi tātou i iriiri hei tinana kotahi.

³ Ephesians 4

We are not then, just an amalgamation of individuals. We belong one to another in a deep, fundamental, and holy way - together we are the Body of Christ.⁴ There is a divine desire for us to not live alone.⁵ So, we need to set aside unaccountable individualism and we must collaborate and co-operate in every way possible. It is also important to recognise that when any particular gathering of Christians proclaims that “we are the body of Christ” it is at once true and not-true. It is true because it is indeed so, but it is not true because each and any congregation is only a small part of the church catholic and universal. For us Anglicans we hold the sense of the church being more than any single congregation in as much as the basic unit is the Diocese – priests, deacons, and laity gathered around the bishop.

As bishops we are called to serve alongside each community but we are also called to serve the Diocese as a whole. As priests, deacons, and laity we need to understand we belong to more than one local expression of the Anglican Church. That’s the nature of licensed ministry. It is both yours and mine. It is ours. Thus all ministry is diocesan ministry, worked out in different local contexts.

This then is what we see. But what do we see opportunity for?

To speak of a vision and a purpose for our life together points us to what we already know. We believe that a holistic understanding of mission has five marks:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth⁶

We believe that this work of mission sits alongside worship as a core purpose of the Church. We note that often there is considerable effort put into the planning and offering of Sunday worship, and ensuring that there continues to be a place in which to worship, and some people who will offer that worship. But the mission edge of our local churches can seem dulled as people struggle both to know what to do, and to find the capacity to do it.

As we have already noted, we believe that the future lies in our capacity to harness collaboration, and rediscover ourselves as one people of God sharing life and ministry as a diocese, where what we do in our individual places is part of a whole. We may think that conceptually now, but how can we make the experience of it more real for all of the people and places of the diocese? Where there are new opportunities for development, or where we might want to respond to urgent ministry needs, whose responsibility is that? We would suggest that it is as a diocese as a whole.

⁴ 1 Cor 12

⁵ Gen 2:18

⁶ *Bonds of Affection-1984 ACC-6 p49, Mission in a Broken World-1990 ACC-8 p101*

Together we are responsible for the mission of God within the whole diocese, not just our own part of it. So, for instance, how do we meet the challenge of being present in a meaningful way in lower socio-economic areas where there are very limited possibilities of local people supporting the costs of stipend and housing? Or how do we continue to offer ministry in rural areas where there is a shrinking towards urban centres? Or how do we attend to the strengthening of earthquake-prone buildings across the diocese? Our presence in hospital chaplaincy is shrinking, how do we support and grow such vital ministries? You can see the fish-hook that is in here. If we want to do these things well together we must find new resources, and be courageous to accept that some things may need to die in order to allow other things to come to life.

We know that the whole Diocese has strengths and weaknesses and we need to work on these together where we can. We know for instance, that we are living in an increasingly secular nation, that we are in overall decline, that we are asset rich and cash poor, that we have many of our resources in capital assets and too few people ministry resources to respond to the needs we perceive as we would like, and so on. But we keep coming back to: how do we help this or that group of Anglicans flourish and be more faithful and loving where they are? And how can the people, the skills, the resources, and the assets of the Diocese be best applied to allow that to happen?

It is this vision of building healthy or flourishing local churches, which includes actively participating in the mission of God, that directs our work and leads us to identify the strategies which can make it happen, along with the stumbling blocks which can prevent it and which we must overcome together.

Let's get into it

There is more to do than listen to your Bishops. We are conscious that we have spoken at length about our life as a Diocese, more so this year as we desire to bring more clarity to these matters and so to find the freedom to do God's work.

The business of Synod gives us much to discuss the next two days. We seek God's grace and blessing as we go about it. And may the glory belong to God.

Bishop Ross Bay
Bishop Jim White

7th September 2017