

SUMMARY OF SYNOD 2019

The First Session of the 56th Synod of the Diocese of Auckland was held at Auckland Cathedral of the Holy Trinity from Thursday 5th to Saturday 7th September 2019, commencing with the Synod Eucharist in St Mary's-in-Holy Trinity. It was a joy to have Bishop Jim White, Assistant Bishop of Auckland, as preacher. He based his sermon on Psalm 34 verse 8, so beautifully crafted by Vaughan Williams into a coronation anthem which was sung by the choir during Communion. "*O taste and see how gracious the Lord is! Blest is the one who trusteth in Him.*" While the Anglican Church was widely known for its social work, Bishop Jim challenged us to "talk to each other about our own life" as it was at Synod that the Church's life was shaped and ordered. Following the service, Synod moved into the Cathedral to commence the business sessions.

Bishop's Charge

The Bishop's Charge was presented by Bishop Ross. All present were welcomed, especially those new to Synod, while former members who had died in the past year were remembered. He also paid tribute to the Episcopal team for the way they had shared the duties of the episcopate during a demanding year. Looking ahead, priorities were: greater support for ministry in the North, continuing the Healthy Church work and enhancing the Executive Chaplain role to free him more from administrative responsibilities.

Bishop Ross paid tribute to the Auckland City Mission for its ongoing work in the city, led by Missioner, Chris Farrelly. The Mission HomeGround project was moving ahead rapidly with building now started and funding well progressed. As he noted, "The transformation in the ability of the Mission to offer its services will be amazing, and the modern, professional and pleasant environment will add significantly to the sense of dignity for those who come to seek those services."

He spoke about positive aspects coming from the Healthy Church consultations and he highlighted the energy and involvement by younger people in taking leadership of social justice initiatives. A core group ADjust (*Auckland Diocesan justice*) recently set up, was currently working on climate justice concerns.

Bishop Ross referred to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care currently under way. He supported its extension to faith-based organisations and acknowledged there would be a need to address matters raised. He also noted it was ten years since the signing of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant.

A copy of both the sermon and the Bishop's Charge can be found on the diocesan website.

The Business of Synod

The order paper consisted of eight motions and four bills. In addition, elections were held for General Synod representatives, Diocesan Council, the Panel of Potential Diocesan Nominators, and the Clergy Remuneration and Retirement Committee.

Motions

The motions covered a wide range of issues as follows:

- *Refugees and Displaced Persons* – This motion drew attention to the plight of those forcibly displaced from their homes through conflict. It encouraged donations to be made to organisations supporting their resettlement as well as prayers being offered as part of regular prayer cycles.

- *Grief and Loss Support Services* – The work being done through the ‘Seasons for Growth’ programme received wide praise. This programme has been extended to the elderly as well as the young for whom it was originally set up. The support of the Diocesan Council was sought in extending the programme while ministry units were challenged to seek ways to deliver the programme in their local communities.
- *Extension of Living Wage* – The decision of the Government to extend the Living Wage to all people working for the core Public Service was commended and a call made for it to be extended to all Government-owned entities and Government contractors.
- *Climate Crisis Action* – This motion supported the call for action made at the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in April. It requested the Diocesan Council to provide resources and assist ministry units to develop action plans and resources for sustainable and regenerative living and the reduction of greenhouse gases at individual, ministry unit, and diocesan levels. It also recommended that a volunteer ‘sustainability champion’ be established in each ministry unit. An amendment was also passed supporting the peaceful protest action taken by young people, including that planned for late September.
- *Diocesan Zero Carbon Plan* – Following the beneficial effects of earlier decisions, this motion asked the Diocesan Council to support and fund the preparation of a Zero Carbon Plan by 31 March 2020 to implement the commitment set out in Standing Resolution 50, with opportunities for collaboration and informed input to contribute to this.
[SR50: THAT the Diocese of Auckland commits to carbon neutrality in its business, including its travel.]
- *Housing for the Elderly and Disabled* – Concern was expressed that poor quality, expensive, insecure housing was a significant factor contributing to poverty and inequality. The motion called on the Government to prioritise an extensive building programme of Housing NZ units using universal design principles that would particularly suit the elderly and those with disabilities.
- *Calculation of Quota* – This motion sought an amendment to the way the quota calculation was determined. In particular, for events or projects where a ministry unit received income, there should be an ability to claim costs and expenses directly incurred.

A Motion without Notice was sought to be introduced at a late stage of Synod. This focussed on all life being God-given and asked the Diocese to express its will regarding the Abortion Bill and End of Life legislation currently before Parliament. After some debate, and without clear agreement on the text of the motion, or prejudice to any future motions, it was withdrawn. The President advised that, based on the views expressed in the debate, he would write to the Government.

Three motions passed at the 2018 Synod were adopted as Standing Resolutions – these related to suicide prevention, sustainable development goals and support for people with disabilities.

Legal Business

Four bills were presented. Two updated legislation – one modernised clergy remuneration and retirement support while the other repealed outdated statutes and dealt with disposal of funds held by Archdeaconry Boards. The remaining bills presented new statutes in place of existing ones:

- The Youth Representation Statute 2019 provided for a more flexible gathering of young people in a Youth Hui (previously Youth Synod), the purpose being “to engage them in the decision-making procedures of the Diocese and encourage youth participation in the life of the Diocese in a safe and friendly environment”. This was passed with some amendments being included.
- The Diocesan Council Statute 2019 provided an update to the Standing Committee Statute 2001 that both reflected current terminology and streamlined the functions and responsibilities of the Diocesan Council in one statute. This bill modernises procedures and provides a coherent structure for decision-making outside Synod.

Presentations

- *Diocesan Council* – a report was given on the wide variety of work done over the past year.
- *City Mission* – a standing ovation followed the report by the City Missioner, Chris Farrelly.
- *NZ Anglican Missions Board* – Michael Hatfield warmly acknowledged the support of the Diocese.
- *Title D Reform* – The Chancellor, Bruce Gray, spoke about work being done to update legislation regarding complaints processes in relation to licensed ministers. The aim is to ensure complaints are resolved in a fair, consistent and objective manner. It is proposed to set up a national body to manage all complaints, and thus mitigate the inevitable conflicts of interest faced by bishops in dealing with them within the Diocese. After a period of discussion among members, a number of queries and suggestions were offered for further consideration when the Chancellors next meet.
- *Mission and Ministry* – Karen Spoelstra and Jacolize Becker challenged ministry units to intentionally prioritise children and young people.

Bishop Jim White

As Synod prepared to adjourn for lunch on Saturday, Bishop Jim joined us supported by Bishop Kito. In a sad and emotional time, he advised he had made the decision to take medical retirement from his role as Assistant Bishop. He spoke with grace and good humour about his illness, eventually diagnosed as a rare and aggressive form of T-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Over recent months, he had been undergoing chemotherapy, but to date, this had not been as successful as hoped. He expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve the Diocese and spoke with special warmth about the support and friendship of Bishop Kito and Bishop Ross. He closed by reading Sam Hunt's poem 'Making Tracks'. This was followed by a waiata and standing ovation from the Synod.

Synod closed with a vote of thanks to all involved in the leadership and organisation of the Synod.