



BISHOP'S CHARGE TO THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY SIXTH SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

GREETINGS

I welcome you to this First Session of the 56th Synod of the Diocese of Auckland. One of the quirky things about Synod is that it is actually played out over three years. Our meeting these next few days is the first of three such Sessions which will make up the Synod as a whole from now through to 2022.

A special welcome then to those who are new members of the Synod, and who thus engage with this quirky sub-culture for the first time. Being a first Session, there will be a larger group who have been elected at AGMs. Please stand so that we might recognise you and welcome you.

I hope that you find this to be an engaging and friendly environment, and that other experienced hands will help you to quickly get used to the particularities of our workings. Part of the necessity of larger meetings such as these is that in order to function well, we need to follow clear sets of rules. I encourage you to not be put off by that, and to participate in the discussions and debates. And of course the episcopal lolly jar is in place at the front especially for those who speak for the first time as a Synod member. But in order that I don't end up with a surplus sitting on my desk next week, adding to my waist line, I encourage everyone to come up with a good excuse as to why they should help themselves.

Welcome also to those who join us as visitors to the Synod, and thank you for your support of us tonight as we get underway. I want to acknowledge partners from the Methodist Church who are here representing their Synods from areas that intersect with our Diocesan boundaries.

I will say more about our relationship with the Methodist Church during the Charge.

IN MEMORIAM

Some who have previously sat as members of this Synod have died during the past year. I ask all present to stand as we hold their lives and ministries in sacred memory.

Clergy

The Reverend Bob Cooper
 The Reverend Ian McCleary
 The Reverend Bruce Cockburn
 The Reverend Ngaire Beehre
 The Reverend David Vereker-Bindon
 The Reverend Grevis Goetz
 The Reverend Tony Ross
 The Reverend John Leitch
 The Reverend Edgar Tu'inukuafe
 The Reverend Brian Flower

Lay

Roy Dillon, One Tree Hill
 Yvonne McGhie-Culpitt, Ponsonby
 John Pybus, Bucklands Beach
 Peter Keys Bucklands Beach
 Joan Winterburn, Pauanui/Tairua
 David Makgill, Waiuku
 Dr George Marshall, Royal Oak
 George Skelton, Paparoa
 Colin Moring, Whangarei

GOD'S WORLD

Climate Change is a frequent topic in the media and in private conversation, as each day brings news of wildfires, storms, droughts and floods of unprecedented severity. Right now we are very mindful of the catastrophic fires in the Amazon forest, and their global implications; and also of the impact of Hurricane Dorian on the Bahamas and the south eastern States of the US. Our prayers continue for the lives and livelihoods of the millions affected. We have motions before us about climate change.

International relationships are marked by severe tension amongst some of the most powerful nations - the Brexit crisis raises enormous uncertainty for the people of Britain and the European Community; and the so-called trade war between China and the US, and the current unrest in Hong Kong, all have potential impacts on many other parts of the world. As a Church we must be constant in our prayers for wisdom, courage and restraint on the part of 'those whose decisions affect the lives of others'.

With the rapid shift from one crisis to another, and the selective focus of the media, it is easy for us to forget the plight of many in places of prolonged deprivation and suffering. The latest information from UNHCR, the United Nations' refugee agency, presents us with record-breaking and heart-breaking statistics. At this moment there are 70.8 million people forcibly displaced. Of these over 41 million are displaced within their own countries, 26 million are refugees, and 3.5 million are asylum seekers. It is good that amongst our Synod motions is one which draws our attention to refugees and displaced persons and encourages our active support of those being resettled here.

Since this Synod last gathered, our own story as a nation has been irreversibly changed by the events of 15 March in Christchurch. What we had fondly thought was impossible, because of our geographic isolation and our reputation for tolerance and hospitality, shattered our naivete with the murder of 51 Muslim worshippers attending Friday prayers. As a nation, and as a Church, this tragedy has given us great cause for self-examination. Yet in the midst of it all we have experienced in new ways the Easter message of life emerging from death, and hope from despair, in the exemplary leadership of our Prime Minister and in the opening of Christian doors and hearts towards those of other faiths.

AUCKLAND CITY MISSION

Mission HomeGround is moving ahead rapidly, and it is exciting to see the building begin to emerge above ground on the old Hobson St site. 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 clients who come to seek those services. The City Missioner, Chris Farrelly, told me how that is already true from the improved environment of their temporary base on Union Street. When I was visiting earlier this year, I saw the more fit for purpose meal area that they now have away from other activities. This has seen an immediate reduction of some of the tensions that were often present within a more confined space with people coming and going.

The Mission Board and fundraising team are to be congratulated on getting this \$90m project almost fully funded, with a public fundraising phase still to come. Chris will brief us on that when he addresses us during Synod, including an update on the achievements of the Diocesan appeal which, though a Lent appeal, has continued through the year with funds still coming in from ministry units. As Chris likes to say, it's been the longest Lent in the Church's history.

THE EPISCOPAL TEAM

I want to pay tribute to the members of the Episcopal Team, and to thank them for the way in which they undertake their work as we share the duties of episcopate together. We have had a fairly demanding year, and in fact it has been a bit of a stretch for most of two years now.

Towards the end of 2017, Bishop Jim became unwell and was mostly off work for 2 months. As we got into early 2018, he recovered his health and returned fully to work. During 2018, one or other member of the Team had sabbatical leave, so that through the year we were always one person short.

Late in 2018, Bishop Jim became unwell again, and investigations led to a diagnosis in February of a rare form of Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Over the past 6 months, a treatment regime of chemotherapy has been undertaken with the hope of getting the lymphoma in remission and allowing Jim to return to health and work. That treatment is ongoing with the ups and downs that chemotherapy brings with it.

We have missed Jim's presence in the Team and have certainly felt the absence of his work. It is great that Jim was able to preach at the opening Eucharist tonight. We have shared aspects of his work across the Team with some additional support here and there, especially from The Reverend Bruce Keeley and The Reverend John Blundell. I also want to acknowledge the work of The Reverend Megan Means who has taken additional responsibility in the oversight and leadership of Local Shared Ministry and the Enablers' team.

The Reverend Sarah Park left her role as Ministry Educator to take up ministry as Vicar of Clevedon. Sarah was Ministry Educator for 8 years, and I could not have asked for a better colleague in that role. The quality of her work in the discernment programme, the Diocesan Training Programme, Post-Ordination Training, the Ministry Conference, and a myriad of other education-related pieces of

work has been exemplary. I know that Sarah has been held in high regard by her colleagues across the Ministry Educators' network who have looked to her for guidance and leadership.

It was a great relief to be able to appoint The Reverend Sarah Moss as the new Ministry Educator and to know that I had a colleague who would bring different skills but the same level of excellence and diligence to the role. Already we are working on ways in which ministry education can be further developed, and especially opportunities for those in lay ministry which is a diocesan priority we have identified.

In this last part of the year, Sarah is also finishing work with ministry units undertaking the Healthy Church Consultation process. In addition she is assisting with archdeaconry oversight of some parishes and mission districts in the North. So it is a very busy start for Sarah, juggling a variety of roles, and I am grateful to her for that as we manage our way through.

I am very conscious of some of the gaps that have resulted while we have been working understrength, and the Team has been working together on how best to attend to that in filling the vacancy created by Sarah Moss changing roles. The areas of priority for us are to offer more oversight and support to ministry in the North, to continue the Healthy Church work with ministry units, and to enhance the Executive Chaplain role so that I am less bogged down by administrative-related work and have greater freedom to attend to wider responsibilities. I hope to announce plans for that soon so that things are in place at the start of 2020.

The other change on the Team this year has been the Bishops' PA. Trudi Mitchell left us at the end of 2018 after 6 years in that role, in order to shift to a new job in Hamilton. We have been joined by Liz Williams who is an excellent addition to the Team. Liz has made a great transition into her role, with her good humour, approachability, and brilliant administration skills enhancing our work really well.

GROWING AS A HEALTHY CHURCH

I mentioned our commitment to continuing the Healthy Church programme that has been a big feature of our engagement with ministry units in the last few years through the work that Sarah Moss has led. We have spoken of this as a ministry unit review programme, but in fact it is not a review in the way that the words is usually understood. Review implies that an outside body will come and examine local work and then report on it with suggestions or directions for improvement.

What this programme does is to provide a tool for a worshipping community of faith to have a look at itself, and with some outside support and guidance to make some decisions about work that can be done to develop its ministry and thus improve its health and effectiveness in mission. For that reason we have decided to speak of this as the Healthy Church Consultation to better reflect what is actually being achieved. By the end of this year 36 ministry units have been part of that consultation work and it has been great to see the learnings and commitment to new ministry that has resulted from it.

Last year we outlined some ways in which we were taking the healthy church model as a guide for ministry initiatives in the Diocese. We have made good progress on many of those initiatives, and I will not report on that in detail tonight.

However one new initiative I want to comment on is our desire to harness the energy of younger people in the Diocese to take leadership for new social justice initiatives. During the year I gathered a group of interested people to set out the vision for that. A core group has continued to meet convened by The Reverend Sarah West, and has taken the name ADjust, meaning Auckland Diocese Justice. They have begun to work on what their priorities might be. An immediate one is climate justice, and so it is great that a few of that group are members of the Synod and will be able to participate in the debates on the order paper in relation to climate issues. As they get going, the group will be interfacing with those already part of social justice work to ensure that there is synergy in the various tasks being undertaken.

At last year's Session of Synod, the Parish of St James' Orakei had just reached the decision to bring an end to their life as a worshipping community. At that time, their Synod reps asked that the decision not be made immediately public as the news was very fresh and there were still details to be agreed on. This was a process worked through over a period of time with that congregation. I am grateful for their courage in facing that decision and for the work of The Reverend Sarah Stevens-Cross as Priest-in-Charge during that time helping the parish through that transition. The decision is consistent with a long-stated hope from this Synod that we will pay attention to the use of the resources of the Diocese as a whole, and especially in relation to capital and property assets.

THE ANGLICAN-METHODIST COVENANT

It is now 10 years since our two Churches signed a covenant together which recognised our common heritage and the closeness of our relationship. The Covenant celebrates the many milestones that had been achieved over some decades of dialogue, and the many points of agreement between us about ecclesiology and mission.

There remains one significant matter which was an aspiration of the Covenant which will allow our relationship to flourish more deeply, and that is the mutual recognition of ordained ministries across our two denominations. This is work that is being actively taken at the level of the Anglican General Synod and the Methodist Conference, our respective national governing bodies. The discussions hinge on our understanding and expression of episcopate, the ministry of oversight which in Anglicanism is expressed through the Bishop, and in Methodism through the Conference and its Presidents. Those of us committed to this work (and I co-convene the Anglican-Methodist Dialogue) remain hopeful about positive progress towards a resolution of that question.

At this Session of Synod then, I want to acknowledge and celebrate the covenant between our Churches, and note this aspiration for which we are still working. Again may I thank the representatives of the Methodist Church here tonight, whose presence is a sign of the importance of our relationship.

ROYAL COMMISSION AND SAFEGUARDING

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care has begun its work with preliminary hearings being held, and its first public hearing scheduled for the end of October. Originally proposed as examining situations where people were in the care of the State, its parameters were extended to include faith-based organisations. The Anglican Church along with other churches lobbied for this. I made my own submission to support this view. My concern was that some of our institutions would be drawn into the inquiry as they provided care for people on behalf of the State. To not allow those who were placed in the same institutions by their families to also have their stories told would be unfair.

It is inevitable that the Anglican Church and its related institutions will have matters to face up to through the Inquiry. I have been working with some of our related organisations about this so that we are well prepared to engage positively in the Commission's work.

Issues of safeguarding for those in ministry are very current across the Communion, and were the subject of work at this year's Anglican Consultative Council meeting. We anticipate guidelines to come from that work which will help our Three Tikanga Church make more progress on strengthening our own processes on these things. In this Diocese we have been increasing opportunities for people in licensed ministry to receive appropriate training in professional boundaries, and will be making more efforts to ensure that people remain current in that training.

TIKANGA PARTNERSHIPS

We have three particular Tikanga relationships in the Diocese. One is with Te Pihopatanga o Te Tai Tokerau, and it is wonderful to have Bishop Kito with us this evening. Tena koe, e hoa. Members of the Episcopal Team and Diocesan Council recently met with colleagues from Tai Tokerau to further our partnership discussions and are committed to continuing that work more actively.

Ministry in parts of North Waikato and the Coromandel bring us into partnership with Te Pihopatanga o Te Manawa o Te Wheke, and we have had more contact with that Amorangi this year, especially around ministry on the Coromandel.

Our third partnership is with the Diocese of Polynesia, which has a number of congregations worshipping in Auckland, hosted by Anglican ministry units. The appointment of Archbishop Fereimi Cama as Bishop of Polynesia this year offers the opportunity for the renewal of those partnership arrangements.

We have two historical matters that are outstanding with Iwi, both of which relate to the sale of land which was gifted to the Church for particular purposes. One is with Ngati Tipa and lands at Port Waikato. The other is with Ngati Whatua and land at Orakei. We are in active conversation with both Iwi in the hope that we can find a resolution to those matters which continue to be an impediment in our relationship.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, may I thank all of who have worked hard in preparation for this Session of Synod. I especially acknowledge our Diocesan Manager, Sonia Maugham and her team. The Deputy Diocesan Manager, Bridget Morrison has offered particular oversight to these preparations along with Kylie Todd.

Thank you to each one of you for making the time to be present these next two days, and for the business which people have brought before us. It is a good agenda and contains much which encourages us to look and act beyond ourselves as part of the Mission of God.

Let us go about our work with grace and hope, and in all things seek the glory of God.

Bishop Ross Bay
5th September 2018