



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

SUMMARY OF SYNOD 12-13 NOVEMBER 2021

Unlike last year, when Synod was able to meet in person for part of its business, COVID-19 restrictions meant the entire Third Session of the Fifty-Sixth Synod on 12–13 November had to be held via Zoom. Despite the challenges of a virtual meeting, just over 250 people were online for most of the Synod.

Archdeacon Carole Hughes led the opening prayers and after some procedural requirements, the Synod began with the Bishop's Charge in which Bishop Ross set out the major themes from the past year as well as challenges ahead.

Bishop's Charge

In Memoriam – Former members of Synod who had died in the past year were remembered.

COVID-19 – In acknowledging the impacts on worship and organisation over the past year, Bishop Ross spoke of some of the challenges ahead, including those relating to vaccine passes. He commented, "Whether or not vaccination certificates are required, there will be people who will feel excluded from attending. If certificates are required, those who are not vaccinated will not be able to attend. If certificates are not required, those who are immune-compromised or who feel unsafe will not be able to attend." Accordingly, the question was how we could show love to one another and avoid making judgements and apportioning blame.

COP26 – The UN Climate Change Conference was coming to a close in Glasgow. He noted the four areas of the Church's *Climate Change Plan* endorsed by the Diocesan Council, namely education; mitigation; worship and liturgy; and outreach and advocacy, and challenged ministry units to take practical, prayerful steps in honouring our mandate for justice and the care of creation.

Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care – Bishop Ross spoke of the work of the Commission, the focus of which was currently on processes of redress. He advised a commitment had been made to more open processes with responses "survivor-driven and informed by the traumatic impact of the abuse". These would include apologies, access to legal advice and counselling and financial compensation. He repeated the apology made to survivors in his evidence to the Commission.

"The Commission's hearings further reinforced the dynamic of power that is present in those who are authorised to represent the Church as its ministers, especially those who are ordained," he said. The revision of Title D Canons on Ministry Standards and the establishment of the Ministry Standards Commission were positive steps in addressing this. The Diocesan Health and Safety Working Group had also drafted a bullying and harassment policy and contracted an outside provider to provide advice and support for any affected. Changes in the Licensed Ministry Statute that were before the Synod would also assist in developing clearer structures and accountabilities relating to trust.

Ministry Formation Team – A review of ministry education and training had led to a new diocesan team being developed under the Ministry Educator to coordinate the Church’s approach to education and training, including more specific training for lay people and specialist areas.

Chancellor and City Missioner – Bishop Ross noted that Helen Robinson had been commissioned and welcomed as the new City Missioner earlier in the year and advised that the Chancellor, the Worshipful Bruce Gray QC, was stepping down following his appointment as Legal Adviser to the Primate. He paid tribute to Bruce for the quality of the advice and support he had provided over 13 years to the Diocese and to him personally and made a presentation on behalf of the Diocese. He announced that Amanda Mark had been appointed as the new Chancellor.

The Bishop’s Charge can be viewed and downloaded here: <https://aucklandanglican.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Synod-Charge-2021.pdf>

Diocesan Council Report – The report outlined a year when church activity had been greatly affected by various COVID-19 lockdowns. The Diocesan Council had played a significant role in supporting ministry units, including advice regarding how funding could be sought for particular projects, as well as support for health and safety organisation.

Bills – Three bills were presented and all were passed.

- The first was an administrative one, updating the Interpretations Statute first enacted more than 90 years ago.
- The second provided a replacement Licensed Ministry Statute, a significant piece of work that not only updated the previous statute but ensured it reflected current licensing practices.
- The third sought, in line with previous decisions, to remove age limits for lay people to be listed on a parish roll or hold office. This prompted considerable discussion, with concerns expressed that this could inadvertently lead to voting on some issues being affected. After some healthy discussion, it was passed.

Motions – Synod then devoted time to discussing several motions, all of which were passed (some with amendments). A number addressed environmental and social justice issues as follows:

- **Taskforce on Nature-Related Financial Disclosures** – this motion endorsed the establishment of the Taskforce which would provide a framework for reporting of nature-related risks. It sought Government support for actively promoting the work of the Taskforce.
- **Reducing Waste** – this motion encouraged all ministry units to set targets to reduce waste related to services and events, while calling on the Government to expedite a national recycling standard and to support the ongoing set up of a network of community recycling hubs. Some spoke of very efficient hubs in their areas, but more were needed. It was noted that reducing purchases was also a critical element of reducing waste.
- **Climate Change Commission’s Report** – this motion acknowledged the report *Ināia tonu nei: a low emissions future for Aotearoa* which outlined New Zealand’s direction for an emissions reduction plan to 2025 and called on the Government to implement the recommendations.
- **Impact of Climate Change** – this motion sought information to be provided by the General Trust Board regarding its investment policy to be reported annually. While this was agreed, a similar requirement relating to companies and others with whom the Trust had investments, was felt to be premature and was withdrawn.
- **Boosting State and Community Housing** – this addressed concerns regarding homes for low-income families and proposed a “state-sector industrial scale programme” with a dedicated Government ministry. New forms of funding were also suggested. While the principles were

supported it was felt that a number of practical difficulties existed and perhaps setting up a diocesan group to consider this further may be useful.

Other motions covered the following:

- ***Disability Responsiveness*** – it was noted that a number of developments were already under way including the diocesan disability policy, a professional development programme for licensed clergy and laity, also the “Stand or Sit?” campaign which aimed to encourage greater understanding and participation of those with disabilities.
- ***Digital Church*** – an interesting discussion ensued on this motion, not only acknowledging the wide use made of digital services during lockdowns, but also the significant potential for reaching new and diverse audiences. As part of this drive, the Diocesan Council is establishing a working group to develop and implement a digital media strategy for the Diocese.
- ***Overseas Missions*** – the important work done by Anglican Missions, especially in the Pacific region, was affirmed. A target of \$185,000 was set by the Diocese for the coming year to support its work. Appreciation was expressed to The Rev’d Craig Harris for his leadership of the Diocesan Committee.
- ***The Selwyn Foundation Constitution*** – the remaining motion provided a necessary amendment to the Foundation’s constitution.

Conclusion

After concluding the business sessions, Bishop Ross reflected on how broad-ranging the conversation had been despite the limitations of the online experience. After a motion of thanks, Archdeacon Jonathan Gale led closing prayers and the Bishop declared the Synod closed.