



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

Tēnā koutou katoa.

Last September we noted that we were making history by holding Synod in a virtual format. Here we are again, and at risk of it becoming another new norm. In 2020 we were able to assemble together for an in-person Session and had held back this year hoping for the same, but the drawn out nature of this lockdown makes that impossible.

Thank you for coming together in this way to further our work. It is more challenging to hold Synod with nearly 300 people to connect together. The opportunity for debate is more limited and it is harder to read the room as we each make our contributions. But people have become a lot more experienced in engaging on video platforms over the last two years and so I am confident we can do our work well in spite of the restrictions. As a result we have included all of the business that was originally on the order paper.

In order to help every piece of business to get a fair chance of being heard, I may close some debates earlier than I would at an in-person gathering if we are coming to a consensus on the matter.

I am very glad that Bishop Kito Pikaahu is able to join us for this opening part of our Synod. Tēnā koe, e hoa, we would be pleased to be greeted by you as we gather.

IN MEMORIAM

As is our custom, we pause to give thanks for former members of the Synod who have died since we last gathered.

House of Clergy

The Right Reverend Jim White
The Reverend Frank Wright
The Reverend Charles Tuke
The Reverend Bob Adams
The Reverend Richard Roberts
The Reverend Peter Philip
The Right Reverend Ben Te Haara

The Reverend Stephen Johnson
The Reverend Arthur Mead
The Reverend Mary Molesworth
The Reverend Christine Bray
The Reverend John Sanders
The Reverend Mary Brown
The Reverend John Raggett

House of Laity

Nan Woods, Parish of Takapuna
Patricia Turton, Parish of Mangere East
Bruce Kissling, Parish of Warkworth
Alistair Parke, former Diocesan Secretary

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

COVID-19

Once again the year has been unavoidably shaped and affected by COVID-19. We lived for a long time essentially shielded from the kind of impacts that many countries have suffered as a result of the virus. The last three months have been very hard. They have been hard on workers and businesses, hard on people who are isolated, hard on the dying, hard on those who already live with deprivation.

They have been hard for us as a Church by not being able to gather together for worship, to enjoy our social networks, and to so easily undertake our normal ministry activities. My deep thanks to clergy and leaders in our ministry units for the ways in which you have held people together, extended care, and provided opportunities for people to attend to their prayer life and participate in virtual forms of corporate worship. It makes a huge difference to people.

Our challenge now is to manage our life with the new protection framework which is likely to take effect at the end of this month, which we know as the traffic lights system. It pivots around vaccinations, and the nature of our activities along with attendance numbers will depend on whether or not vaccination certificates are required at gatherings. We are all facing the tension between our theological ideal of welcoming all people into our churches whatever their situation and the need to provide a safe and healthy environment in which to gather.

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.

How will we show love to one another? There is a real risk that the fact of vaccination certificates will create a rift in our society and however we have to manage our life around them we must work hard at not buying into that with judgement, blame and discrimination.

The COVID landscape has been an ever-changing one for the past 20 months and I am particularly grateful to the members of the Episcopal Team for their work in interpreting and applying the health advice to our context, then supporting and guiding ministry units to implement it. The Team has been tireless in their commitment to making it work and helping us all to find our way together through the challenges we have faced.

COP26

As we open our Synod, COP26, the United Nations Climate Change Conference is closing its negotiations.

We have been fortunate to have Rod Oram, one of our own, attending the Conference of Partners in his capacity as a journalist. Rod has done much over the years to challenge and inspire this Diocese on issues of climate justice. Rod has sent a series of reports on the conference's progress, with its great mixture of hopes and frustrations, as it seeks bigger and binding commitments to the vision set by the 2015 Paris Agreement. One of the significant features has been a shift in emphasis, as Rod describes it, from the 'apportioning of pain to the apportioning of opportunities.'

Of particular note is the strong move by many businesses and financial institutions towards a low carbon economy. An international example is the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero which has mobilised \$US130 trillion for sustainable investment. Within NZ the Sustainable Business Council is promoting important local initiatives. Our nation has much more to do to meet its commitments.

The Diocese of Auckland is seeking to do its part, thanks to the ministry of our Diocesan Sustainability Fieldworker, Cathy Bi-Riley, and the work of the Anglican Climate Action Network. Together they have produced the Auckland Anglican Response to Climate Change Plan, which has been endorsed this year by Diocesan Council.

In its four areas – education; mitigation; worship and liturgy; and outreach and advocacy – the Plan invites and challenges every Ministry Unit, and the Diocesan Office, to take very practical, prayerful steps in honouring our missional mandate for justice and the care of creation. The Sustainability Fieldworker and members of the Climate Action Network will be essential resources for and encouragers of our participation in the Plan.

We have four climate and sustainability related motions to attend to during this Session of Synod which are very timely in relation to all of this.

AUCKLAND CITY MISSION

Helen Robinson was welcomed and commissioned as the new City Missioner earlier this year. Helen comes from a strong background working in aid and social services and joined the City Mission in 2013. Her appointment offers great continuity to the leadership of the Mission following on from

Chris Farrelly's tenure. If we had been gathered in person, Helen was to have been the preacher at the Synod Eucharist. We will find another occasion for that.

Lockdown has created some delays in completing the building of Mission HomeGround, but it is still expected that the Mission staff will be in the new building before the end of this year.

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

In December 2020 the Royal Commission heard evidence from survivors of abuse in faith-based settings. The Commission had chosen as its focus the Salvation Army, the Anglican Church, and the Catholic Church. Survivors' experiences took place in a variety of settings from schools to children's homes and in local churches. Some of this took place in the Diocese of Auckland and our related institutions.

The focus of this phase of the Commission's work has been on processes of redress, that is, what happens for a survivor when they approach the Church or one of its related bodies to report abuse and seek a response. Survivors described experiences of being ignored or stonewalled, of slow and inadequate processes, of legal mechanisms used to deflect responsibility, of protection of those accused of abuse, and of a lack of willingness to provide adequate compensation to support apologies where they were offered.

Representatives of the Churches gave evidence in March this year. From the Anglican Church evidence was provided by myself, Bishop Peter Carrell of Christchurch, and Archbishops Don Tamihere and Philip Richardson. We have not sought to excuse our actions or inactions, and have tried to set out our processes, the way they are changing, and our openness to learn from survivors and from the work of the Commission in order to build safe communities of belonging and care.

Considerable effort has been put into the revision of the Title D Canons on Ministry Standards. A key shift in these changes has been the place of the bishop in the process of a complaint. Previously the bishop has determined whether there is a case to answer, the mechanism for its process, whether to accept any findings, and the outcome that would be imposed. The bishop was also meant to ensure the pastoral care of the parties.

The establishment of the Ministry Standards Commission along with its legally-trained Registrar who assesses and oversees complaints, removes the bishop from those various and conflicted roles and allows a greater level of independence and objectivity to be applied.

At the same time our Diocesan Health and Safety Working Group has drafted a policy on bullying and harassment and we have contracted an outside provider to provide advice and support for people affected by those experiences.

The Commission 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. Considerable care needs to be taken in the selection and training of our ministers, a matter to which we have given increasing attention over many years.

In addition, we need to be much more careful about the oversight of people who hold the authority of the Bishop to offer ministry, among other things the ongoing accountabilities around supervision and professional development that help to promote and maintain safe ministry practice. This is a shift for an organisation that has always worked on a high trust model of ministry relationships. However, it is fair for people to expect us to be able to demonstrate the basis on which that trust is granted. Changes in the Licensed Ministry Statute that are before us at this Session are in part about developing clearer structures and accountabilities relating to that trust.

We have made a commitment to more open processes of redress where it is accepted that abuse has occurred. Our responses will be survivor-driven and informed by the traumatic impact of the abuse on them. They will include apologies, access to legal advice and counselling, and financial compensation. We have already begun to implement this approach over the last couple of years in partnership with the Anglican Trust for Women and Children in relation to historical complaints of abuse in care.

The Royal Commission is expected to publish a report on this phase of its work in December. We await that report and the additional learnings that it will offer to our Church. These are matters of shame for us, and the experiences of survivors in no way reflect the kind of Church we aspire to be.

I wish to reiterate the apology that I made to survivors in my evidence to the Royal Commission.

Thank you to those survivors that have come forward and spoken of your abuse. I appreciate there are also survivors that decided not to share your experience in a public forum. Your experiences are no less important, and I hope this process gives you the strength to share your suffering so that the Anglican Church has the opportunity to not only make it right but also has the opportunity to learn from these instances of abuse and neglect.

I apologise on behalf of the Diocese to all those that have been in anyway abused or neglected while in our care. I also apologise for the times when the Anglican Church has compounded your pain and suffering by responding to such instances of abuse and neglect in an inappropriate manner.

The Diocese and the Anglican Church must ensure that real and meaningful protections continue to be implemented to safeguard our most vulnerable. I am committed to ensuring this occurs. I am also committed to ensure the Diocese works with the Commission to establish an appropriate pathway for survivors to achieve the appropriate redress they deserve.

In a related way we have been shocked and ashamed by what has become known about historical abuse at Dilworth School. Allegations of abuse, some now admitted and others before the courts, occurred over a sustained period of time and have involved multiple offenders being former staff at the school. A former Chaplain of the school, Ross Browne, has admitted offences and is due to be sentenced in December. A Church Tribunal will be convened to determine Mr Browne's standing as a priest, and we will undertake a review of our own processes in relation to his ministry and appointments in the Diocese.

To the survivors of his abuse I extend my apologies. You should have been able to look to a priest in the Church as a person who could have ensured your safety and care, especially when the wider environment was not providing you with that, and you were failed.

We must learn from all of these experiences, and ensure that we do all that we can to prevent such behaviour recurring.

MINISTRY FORMATION TEAM

A significant piece of work this year has been the review of ministry education and training in the Diocese with a view to creating more opportunities for lay people to engage in training. We invited Dr John Langley who is an education professional and an active Anglican to lead us through a review and offer us some advice. His review reported on the high quality of current courses, the good levels of involvement and satisfaction with them, and the opportunities to do more.

In recent months we have worked through a restructure process to draw together the many aspects of education and training that currently exist and form them into one team which will be a ministry formation team. The word formation is being used as an all-encompassing term to describe the various aspects of training and education that together form people for their particular ministries as disciples of Jesus Christ and as baptised members of the Church, the Body of Christ. This team will be led by the Ministry Educator and will build further on the good synergies that already exist among those undertaking this work. A new role is being established to give specific focus to lay training alongside other specialist areas of ministry formation.

A NEW CHANCELLOR FOR THE DIOCESE

Earlier this year our Chancellor, Bruce Gray QC, was commissioned as Legal Advisor to the Primate. When he accepted this role, Bruce indicated to me that in order to avoid any future conflicts of interest he should resign his role as Diocesan Chancellor in Auckland. He told me that he could stay in post until this Session of Synod, and as you can see I have eked that out until the last minute, even delaying Synod by two months.

I thought and prayed long and hard about a replacement for Bruce, and was delighted when Amanda Mark accepted my invitation to take up this role. Amanda has over 30 years legal experience working first in commercial litigation and for the last 25 years as an in-house lawyer in the public health sector and is currently General Counsel for Waitemata District Health Board.

Amanda is a parishioner at St Matthew-in-the-City, has been a member of Diocesan Council, is Deputy Chair of Synod Committees and serves on the Legal Business Committee. Amanda will be ordained to the diaconate this year and will offer ministry at St Matthew's in a non-stipendiary capacity.

Amanda brings a great care for the Church to the work of Chancellor and understands this as a call of God on her life to offer her gifts and skills to God and the Church in this way. I know Amanda to be a person of wisdom and compassion and I look forward to working with her as Chancellor.

Welcome Amanda, and when whatever normal circumstances look like return, we will find an opportunity to commission you in this work.

Bruce, I wish to extend the thanks of the Diocese to you. You took up this ministry in 2008 and over these past 13 years have been a source of consistent wise advice to the Synod, the Diocese, and the Bishop. Your guidance to me when I have faced complex decisions has been invaluable. You have always been available to offer advice, and not in a way that tells me what to do but that helps me to come to the best decision that I can, and then supports me in the implementing of it. You have stood by me through some difficult and challenging matters and have brought your aura of calm optimism to whatever we have faced. Thank you for being such a good friend and colleague in ministry with us. The Primates are very blessed to now be the recipients of your advice and guidance.

IN CONCLUSION

Let's proceed to our work in faith and hope as we seek to build the Church in this Diocese as an agent of the grace and love of God.

Bishop Ross Bay
12th November 2021