

## Third Ordinary Session of the 46<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Sydney: October 2004

### Presidential Address

Delivered by Dr Peter Jensen, Archbishop of Sydney, on Monday 18 October 2004.

'Who lives here?' asked my taxi driver outside the gates of Bishopscourt. Born just over 50 years ago in mainland China, a Buddhist, a graduate in engineering from a University in Beijing, he has lived in Australia since the 1980s, and his son is studying in the medical faculty at the University of Sydney. 'The Archbishop of Sydney,' I replied modestly. Without hesitation he gave his verdict: 'He must be a very old man'. 'On the contrary,' I assured him, 'he is exactly the same age as I am!'

This little encounter reminded me again of the terms and conditions under which God is creating a new Australia. The story of the fully qualified engineer or teacher or accountant driving a taxi for a living because they find it impossible to get a job in the new culture is a typical one. He has lived here for many years and yet language is still a significant barrier. But not to his son. He exemplifies the upward thrust of the next generation: the child who studies at the University and progresses the family fortunes, while many of the children of the families who have been here for generations are more relaxed. Asians are now welcome, and we have got used to seeing Buddhist temples as well as churches and mosques.

Note the cultural differences. The Chinese veneration for age, and thus, the Archbishop will be old; the Anglo sense that age is decline, and thus, the defensive reply of the Archbishop. On my side of the cab was a man who had been brought up to believe that the White Australia Policy was morally defensible and culturally necessary. It was, after all, virtually the first business of the new Commonwealth Government in 1901. It was premised on the belief that we needed a British Australia, an outpost of the Empire, culturally and racially homogenous, Christian - preferably Protestant at that. If you wanted to understand Australia, you had to understand that the culture was Christian, and that the Churches had a highly significant part in everyday life.

And, if I put on those old spectacles of the White Australia Policy, what did I see on the other side of the cab? I could have seen the fulfilment of all our fears. I could have seen an Asian, taking a job from someone else, with poor English skills and an exotic religion, a man who symbolically poses a threat to my way of life and my religion and the standard of living of my family, because his son is in the University. I could have seen the end of British Australia. I could have seen my church and my culture being sidelined, losing its historical place and becoming just one amongst many. I may have experienced feelings of anxiety and superiority.

But, of course, long ago the Bible forced me to give up wearing the White Australia spectacles. When I looked at the driver, I saw a fellow human-being, a real and welcome Australian; indeed I saw something of the present and the future of Australia. After we had laughed about our little conversation at the gate, we exchanged names and shook hands. As I left, he said, 'See you later!'; and I said 'See you, mate'; because, although the chances of us actually encountering each other again are slight, we belong to a community, a sort of overgrown village called Australia, where men are still mates and we could bump into each other. So I went home, and thought again about the meaning of our Mission.

Many years ago Donald Horne wrote something in the *Australian* newspaper which I clipped out and carry in my Bible: 'Without cultivation of Australian creativity – and incidentally, our multicultural policy may lie near the centre of our creativity - our best years will already be behind us. The history of European Australia will be of a British achievement that gradually failed as the Australians themselves took over – because they were afraid to be Australian.'

I believe that as a nation we read the times correctly: we realised that we would no longer remain a British enclave, that it was neither possible or desirable. We have taken the decision to embrace newcomers from many places. We have also become conscious of the need to deal with issues arising from the pre-European history of our country. When we no longer care whether we win or lose against the English at cricket. We will truly be Australians, not the British in Australia. Such a state of mind cannot be rushed; I do not expect to see it in my generation!

The British contribution to our nation is ineffaceable and largely positive; for myself, I welcome the sign of this on our national flag. In fact, we are still coming to terms with that heritage. Some of it has to be atoned for and reversed; other bits of it we will modify and make our own; still ahead of us we have the task of assimilating and defending elements of the founding civilisation which has made us what we are. Our maturity as a nation

will be measured by our determination to make such things as freedom of speech and religion, the rule of law, parliamentary democracy and the subservient role of the armed services not just assumptions, but resolutely our own.

Horne thinks that our multicultural policy will be a well-spring of creativity. I agree: Australia welcomes those from many cultures, and recognises that the host culture itself will rightly be changed and refreshed by the encounter. But the prior culture will always occupy a peculiar place. After all, we are not a multi-lingual nation; English is and will remain our language. However, it will be Australian English, enriched and changed by all the migrant streams which have flowed here. The test for Australia is the willingness to receive the gifts being offered both by the indigenous Australians and the newcomers, and to accept and gladly embrace change. Thus migrants will become Australians; but Australia will change because they have become us.

The nation has read the times correctly - but what of the English Church, the Church of England? As Christians, we can ask, what is God in his providence doing here – and how should we respond? We have altered our name, but have we become Australian? In particular, have we become ‘new Australian’? Or are Horne’s words especially applicable to us – ‘The history of European Australia will be of a British achievement that gradually failed as the Australians themselves took over – because they were afraid to be Australian’?

At one level, the question is easily answered: the Australian Anglican Church is not English; it is characteristically Australian, just as the Australian soldier is characteristically Australian. At another level, however, the true answer is not so favourable. British Australia has been altered radically by the migrants of Europe and Asia in the last forty years: has our church assimilated this migrant flow and allowed itself to be changed by it?

It is easy to be defensive and to point out that those coming to this country were not natural candidates for membership of a white Protestant church. But at the same time we bemoan our incapacity to reach out to the so-called ‘working class’. What we failed to see was that the post-war working class was going to be dominated by migrants; newcomers like my taxi driver, rich in determination, and even in education, but poorer in communication skills if the language had to be English; poor especially in an understanding of how their new homeland ‘worked’; fearful of losing their children to its very different ways.

These new neighbours of ours needed our practical support and love; in particular, they needed a gift which we had in abundance: the capacity to communicate. To some extent we responded; we had a chaplain working amongst migrants, for example. With the advantage of hindsight we can now see, however, that we ought to have had vigorous English-language classes in all the suburbs which were becoming ethnic ghettos, that we should have been so welcoming and helpful to the men, women and children who were coping with the great difficulties of migration. I believe that had we done far more even in this simple way, we would have had excellent opportunities for evangelism and church planting. We would have seen our church enter far more securely into the national life.

Instead, however, we tended to experience anxiety as we felt our traditional suburbs being taken over by others. We huddled close together and hoped that the threat would pass and leave us unscathed; or, worse, we thought of ourselves as culturally superior. If newcomers arrived, they were made to feel that they were second-class (after all, just like children, they could not speak proper English), and they had to conform to our way of doing things. The result was small isolated churches, usually unsupported from the Diocesan fellowship, cut off from their neighbourhoods, low on morale: but Anglican to the end.

We thank God for the faithfulness and tenacity of many in the small “Anglo-ethnic” churches of our diocese. But we also thank God that retreat is not the whole story. The presentation planned for tonight is designed to show us the surprising range of ethnic churches and ministries which we have become involved in. We may not have done enough, but we have been active over many years and we are increasingly so. We were often neighbourly; 25 years ago we did appoint ethnic workers; ESL classes are in full swing in many places; we have become more accepting and welcoming of people born overseas; our church services are far more simple and easy to enter than they used to be; more than that, we now have scores of ethnic congregations throughout Sydney in association with the Diocese.

So what is God doing here? As a Diocese, our gift to this nation and its future is Bible-based churches. To be Australian, they need to be open to all people. These churches will arise from our Christ-centred evangelistic culture and our grasp of the gospel. Our Mission asks us to recognise that this great movement of peoples which we have witnessed is an act of God; that the Lord has brought these people here from lands where it is impossible to preach the gospel; that in his providence he has brought cross-cultural work to us and given us an unparalleled opportunity to reach out into all the world through these different Australians. The Diocesan Mission must involve an on-the-

ground, serious encounter with the real nation, the new nation in which we now live, or we will deserve to sink into obscurity as a failed British experiment.

Tonight, as our Mission report, we are going to have a presentation of the work that is going on amongst what we may call ethnic Sydney/Wollongong. We will see that God has already blessed our determination to reach the peoples of Australia for Christ. It is intended to lead to thanksgiving for all that has been done; but it is intended to challenge us about what should be done; it is intended to make us sensitive to what we ought to do. I am told that by 2025 almost half the people living in our region will have been born overseas. The story of our Mission will either include them, or be a failure.

I believe that when you hear tonight's presentation you will resolve that we must become even more Australian by embracing the cultures of those who have settled here and those who were here when Europeans arrived. I believe that you will become impatient to see this Synod itself far more representative of the reality of contemporary Australia. During the course of the Synod we will have the opportunity to think more about the energies we need to release in this connection. This Diocese has much to receive; but we also have much to give. What should we be doing?

What will hinder us are those old enemies, our feelings of anxiety and our feeling of superiority. The gospel-welcoming work of our Diocese has been held back by both these unfortunate manifestations of our sinfulness. Even to this day some of our ethnic and indigenous brothers and sisters are made to feel like children, instead of being welcomed and heard in the counsels of the church. Think about our own attitudes, brothers and sisters - do I want this church to be a failed British experiment, or a genuinely Australian Church; or better still a biblical church filled with the riches of the nations?

I have nothing but admiration for three local churches, St David's Arncliffe, St Paul's Kogarah and St Andrew's Strathfield who have recently accepted ethnic congregations and ministers, even though they have now lost their Anglo numerical superiority. It has not been easy for either side – there are interesting stories we could tell about Mediterranean Christians relating to Anglo Christians at St David's. But there has been immense grace on both sides, and I believe we are seeing something which comes straight from the New Testament idea of the Church: 'all one in Christ Jesus'. What frightens me is not the stories of difficulties in Arncliffe, Kogarah and Strathfield – but of "Anglo-centric" churches set in the midst of vast ethnic populations with no taskforce, no cry for help, no plans to reach their new neighbours. They are set to fade genteelly away.

St Paul's, St David's and St Andrew's have chosen the future. They are now part of the story of our Mission. Two years ago in the first session of this 46<sup>th</sup> Synod, in a solemn moment we covenanted together in submission to the word of the Lord Jesus Christ 'to see that Christ is proclaimed to all people'. We accepted as the initial goal of the Mission 'to see at least 10% of the population of the region of the Diocese in Bible-based churches in 10 years'. This is the third and last session of this Synod, and it is right for us to check the story, to ask ourselves what has happened and to consider the future. In the session tonight you will see further evidence of God's blessing on the Mission, and be further challenged by the job ahead. At least let us resolve this, that if God blesses us, amongst the 10% there will be people from all nations, even though we will have to change to make it so.

What is our numerical starting point? We did some work on numbers during the year. You may remember that the National Church Life Survey reported that we had 52,000 men, women and children in church, by their best estimate on the day when the survey took place in May 2001. This was an upward increase of 11% over the figures in 1991. The population of the diocesan region at that time was approximately 4.1 million persons, so our figures stood at 1.3%. On the other hand a particular day is not a very accurate way of indicating membership. So we have done further calculations. If we think of attendance over a month, there were more like 67,000 Anglicans (or 1.6%) regularly in our churches in 2001.

What of the other Bible-based churches? Somewhat arbitrarily we chose to count the denominations who are members of the NSW Council of Churches, insofar as they have churches in the region of the Diocese. When this calculation is done, we have something like 121,000 regular members of such Protestant churches, or 3.2% of the population of the region. In 2011, the population will be about 4.6 million. Thus if all the churches were to grow by God's blessing at the same rate, this would mean that we would see the Diocesan membership become four times what it is now, or around 250,000. We may need to aim for more than that.

It is still too early to work out where the figures now stand. What we do know is that in the first 18 months of the Mission, something like 65 to 70 new congregations, fellowships and churches have begun in connection with our Anglican churches – some tiny, others with significant membership. We have also done work which assumes a connection between financial giving and numbers, and, if the connection holds, there are the first signs of an increase beyond what you may expect, given historic trends. I cannot say more than this; but we are entitled to

draw the conclusion that if the Mission were beginning to make a difference, it would look something like this in the early stages. The evidence is also consistent with the view that in the first enthusiasm the easiest work has been done. But that is no guarantee that it will continue. We should be encouraged but not complacent.

Numbers and mission were also on the agenda of the General Synod of our national church when it met a fortnight ago. Frankly, the statistics of our national church are worrying, with only four dioceses out of 23 registering any growth in the decade between 1991 and 2001. The relative absence of people under 40 is alarming; so too is the smallness of many congregations and the aging of those in ministry.

I am glad to say that these issues received some attention, but the amount of time committed to it was, in my opinion, far less than the significance of the crisis warranted. I stick to my belief that the national church has a short life-span if action is not taken urgently. I am heartened, at least by some of the rather radical proposals incorporated in the motion passed by the Synod, including the thought that parish and diocesan boundaries may need to be crossed and that new styles of church will appear.

The attention of the media was caught by such issues as women in the episcopate, homosexuality and lay administration. The move to allow for the consecration of women as bishops failed to achieve the majorities which it required; the blessing of same sex unions and the ordination of practising homosexuals was not condoned; the recent change to the Marriage Act, making it clear that marriage is between a man and a woman was endorsed. The Synod also made it clear that it was not prepared to condone lay administration of the holy communion. All of these matters are important in their own right, and will remain on the agenda of the national and international church.

However, the key matter before the Synod was child protection legislation. It was enormously important both for the sake of children and for the sake of the reputation of the Church that we acted together and acted decisively. Getting a national body like the Anglican church to respond was always going to be enormously difficult. That this was achieved was in no small measure due to the labours of a group which included Garth Blake and Philip Gerber, and I want to pay a special tribute to the efforts of these two men. I also want to thank the Sydney delegates to General Synod. They attended well prepared to take a full part in its proceedings and they gave themselves with wisdom and zeal. Needless to say their wisdom was not always followed by the Synod as a whole, but that is the nature of synodical government.

I suppose that my disappointment that we did not give more quality time to the issues raised by evangelism is tempered by this consideration, that the matters which we did spend so much time and energy on all lead back in some way or other to our mission and to fundamental issues. For example, we will not be able to mission if our reputation in the child protection area is not restored. Matters to do with homosexuality likewise raise issues of reputation and of biblical authority. We ought to be grateful for the outcome in Perth since it is in such marked contrast to what we see happening in the USA, Canada and Britain, and, apparently, in the uniting Church in Australia. It is clear that we do not approve the endorsement of sexual standards that has become such a contentious matter in these places. The new national code of conduct reflects exactly the same standards: faithfulness in marriage and chastity outside it.

The consecration of women bishops and the lay administration of holy communion likewise raise issues of authority, unity and mission. You all know my opinion, that the consecration of women bishops would be unbiblical, but that lay and diaconal administration is warranted. I admit that many in the national church think otherwise. My guess is that neither issue will disappear; if either occurs other than through the General Synod it will be accompanied by a major shift in the way we relate to each other.

In any case, however, I think that our theologians need to give more energy to arguing our case on both these subjects. If our view of God's word is correct, we will be able to show first that our distinction between men and women is actually good for us and for our society, and second that our view of lay administration is both right in itself and useful for the church in mission. I think that both cases can be made; I believe that they have to continue to be made. To this end, can I commend to you Dr Kirsten Birkett's most recent book, *The Essence of the Family*.

Let me continue the story of the Mission from the point of view of the Mission Task Force. You will remember discussing some of these matters at last year's Synod. There are four, all beginning with the letter 'M'.

## **Ministry**

Policy 3 calls for a concentrated effort in recruiting, training and deploying Christian workers. One of the signs of God's blessing upon us is the multiplication of people in training for ministry. On any count, there are large numbers of (mainly) young men and women who are offering for ministry. We have a record number at Moore

College, and this will continue next year. Out of this number we now have 128 ordinands, also a never-before heard of quantity. In addition, there are some 100 part time and full time students in the Youthworks College, and, of course quite a number of Anglicans enrolled at Sydney Missionary and Bible College.

Last year Phillip Jensen introduced a discussion in the Synod about the proper way in which to recognise and organise the ministry in the light of the needs of the Mission. Our present structures do not adequately reflect the needs of the fellowships, congregations and churches we are beginning. The matter has been under constant discussion since then, and progress has been made in policy and planning.

The essence of the matter is this. The key ministry in the parish system is that of the presbyter. He needs to be a fully trained minister of the word and sacraments, capable in principle of parochial leadership. We are committed to a four year period of academic education at Moore College for such people, together with supervised experience and all of life in-service training. Whatever else happens, this ministry must be appreciated and in place. Other ministries, lay or ordained, can flourish around this key ministry.

It is the key ministry but by no means the only one. As the Mission progresses it is clear that greater flexibility is required and a variety of specialist word ministries will emerge: youth and children's workers are an obvious example; but there will be pastoral workers, and ethnic-specific and other congregational leaders as well. At the moment we have tended to develop an irregular set of ministries often connected to particular parishes or groups, but without wider recognition. I imagine such parish-based licensed ministries will continue and even grow, but there is a need for something with greater clarity and authority. To help in this area I am giving very serious consideration to making the long-term diaconate a clearer ministry option and so expanding the number of deacons. One consequence would be that we rethink the methods and mix of our four year training. Thus we would retain a four year program of diaconal training, but with the possibility of different emphases.

Why take this step? Ordination has a number of consequences, notably recognition and portability. By recognition I mean that it is a human assurance of the suitability of the ordained person in training and character for a certain ministry. This is symbolised in the service where the deacon answers questions, the congregation is permitted to challenge the candidates or affirm them, prayer is made for them and the bishop lays hands on them. Solemnly taking the responsibility of the diaconate gives the deacons an authority for service.

Secondly, as a consequence, it achieves what may be called 'portability'. The employment of a deacon across parishes and congregations is enhanced by clarity about who the deacon is, what he or she has undertaken, and what training has shaped the person. Recognition and portability will make ministry more attractive to workers and parishes alike and provide greater flexibility with what we may call, 'quality control'.

In other words, I am contemplating something which I have hitherto resisted – the separation of the requirements for ordination of presbyters and deacons. But it is a risk which is demanded by the Mission and if carried forward with integrity will bring much good in its train. I look forward to the advice you will give me as we discuss this matter in Synod.

At this stage I was going to speak about the question of lay and diaconal administration of the Lord's Supper. In the light of what we have just done, there is no need for me to do so. You can read what I would have said in the printed version of my address.

## **Media**

A fundamental aim I had for this year was to upgrade our communications, to give us all superior access to Mission news, planning, prayer requests and strategic thought. Our Diocese is a potentially rich network of fellowship and ministry, in which we can strengthen each other with information, encouragement, prayer and vision. The internet could have been specifically invented to get the most out of such a fellowship network – we may find this a gift of God's providence as significant as the invention of printing. Allan Dowthwaite and his team at Anglican Media believe that their website is a crucial resource for the Mission.

To achieve this, they have made tough decisions about the work they do, and put effort into a complete overhaul of the existing site. They want to make sydneyanglicans.net so interesting and so useful that it will be first port of call for those in the habit of turning on the computer as the initial task each day, indeed the site that comes up automatically when you log on. Naturally, it will link to the other Diocesan sites and be even more informative to the outside world than our present site has been. The outsider will have a far better picture of what our Diocese is about.

The aim is to create a news-flow which will let everyone in the Diocese benefit from and contribute to all the thinking that is going on, a site that will reflect and stimulate the energy of the Diocese. There will be access

to news both local and beyond, as well as pastoral, missiological, theological and biblical resources. At the centre of it, I trust, there will be a commitment to prayer and making prayer requests known, capitalising on the work done already by Reg Piper. Allan is going to launch the site at this Synod, and members can view it on the computers set up in the foyer. But our work in communication has to involve even more than this. We do not live in an intellectual or moral vacuum. The Anglican Church in this country is more turbulent than it has been in the past, although this turbulence is nothing compared with what is occurring world-wide. I have never known a time when our evangelical theological convictions have come under such intense critical scrutiny. Others have suddenly become interested in explaining, critiquing and sometimes lampooning us. Our history, our theology, our politics have become of public interest in this country and elsewhere.

Why is this so? Because we are engaged in a fresh and challenging way in the task of commending the biblical faith, and are seen as a threat by many inside and outside the church. Furthermore, the gospel has never made more sense than it makes in a society becoming sick of individualism and materialism.

On the other hand, I have to say that the level of the critique has on some occasions been painfully inadequate. The idea that our Doctrine Commission has fallen in the Arian heresy is a travesty; and so too are many of the other theological criticisms. However we must make this case, and so far we have not focused our energies on the task. If we do not want to be explained to the world by others who do not understand us, we must be prepared to explain ourselves and our message. An exciting, daunting and interesting task awaits our historians, journalists, letter-writers, bloggers, theologians and apologists. Please begin work at once – we have never had such an audience.

### **Moore**

The theological College remains at the centre of the Mission and Diocesan life. We are asking of it an immense amount: basically, we are saying 'expand without resources. If 600 students turn up for next year please accept them all.' We can only ask it to do what it is now doing because there is so much sound infrastructure such as Library and teachers, the result of sacrificial commitment by Council, Faculty, students and supporters. However, please notice that we are already asking for the impossible.

That said, I am encouraged that in God's providence there is good news. The Federal Government has introduced a HECS scheme for private providers, called Fee-help. Under the provisions of this scheme, students who are Australian citizens may if they wish, borrow the money for their education up to a certain amount and then pay it back through the income-tax system over many years. It seems likely that the College will be registered under this scheme, and first indications are that students are happy with it. It means that fees can be set at a more realistic level than they have been. It is possible that potential students will be able to enter College earlier as study becomes more economically possible.

This is the single most revolutionary funding change in the history of theological education in this country. It comes at the precise moment when the College is in need of more money, and the Diocese is having to reduce its support to individual candidates because of the numbers now offering. It comes at a cost of far greater government involvement in our affairs, and the day may come when we have to pull out as a matter of principle. But at this moment it is hard not to see it as a mark of God's favour as we step forward in the Mission, considering that so much, strategically, depends upon the flow of workers.

The second piece of good news is that the College Council has appointed Mr Doug Marr to take on the task of developing the College infrastructure. Without a person of his skill and commitment to oversee the work, it could hardly proceed at all. Certainly the Principal must be freed as much as possible to be the chief teacher and pastor of the College.

For its buildings, the College needs sums of money well beyond what we can contemplate in the ordinary course of events. On the other hand a staged program would work, and there is little doubt what the first stage would be if we stay at Newtown: a new Library. This once-off building, costing \$10 million, would transform the College instantly and make possible what seems now to be impossible. Frankly, I am very critical of the previous principal who should have seen to the building of it five years ago! We could start tomorrow and it would not be soon enough. I think this is a matter for sustained prayer by our community.

### **Money**

We are hindered by the lack of money. Two years ago we re-organised our property work, and the Mission property committee gave you an excellent report on future needs at the last synod. The Committee is now stymied, as are the College and other important parts of our work, because money in the magnitude of which we are thinking is simply not available to us. You may remember that if we were to develop 10 new church

sites it would cost something in the order of \$100 million. We had a significant discussion about this at the last Synod and sought your advice.

I said that the money was not available to us, and that is true if we were thinking of fund-raising and the like as we did with Vision for Growth. We can and should pray to the Lord about this, for the money is certainly available to him. The New Capital Project, which was described in the September edition of Southern Cross is an attempt to see whether the Lord's answer is that we do actually already have the resources, but that we need to use them more effectively. Later in the Synod there will be an opportunity to discuss the matter a little further, but let me make four preliminary remarks.

First, all my talk about us *needing* money is not to be understood in an absolute sense. Very effective Christian ministry is carried on, sometimes, with little in the way of resource. On the other hand, we ought not to condemn our brothers and sisters to work in hopeless conditions just because we do not take the steps we should. Remember, someone paid the money to bring the gospel to Australia in the first place.

Second, it is God's work to raise the money, not ours; we are merely his servants in the doing of it. We need to pray about this at every step and seek his abundance.

Third, the success of this initiative is going to test the spiritual life of the Diocese to its limits. I am not for a moment guessing, and neither should anyone, what may be suggested to us. But we can hardly imagine that we will be allowed to remain as we are without change and hard decisions. We are all going to need to be wise, fair, generous and loving.

Fourth, from the very beginning let it be understood that if we do manage to raise new capital, it must also be in spirit of generosity to those beyond the borders of our own Diocese. Surely we cannot grasp all to ourselves. It is becoming more and more evident that sheer materialism is one of the most significant barriers to the gospel in this country. Churches are prone to fall sick with the viral infections of the age in which they live. If we seek to raise money it must be in a godly way, with godly aims and a godly heart.

So there you have the four M's of 2004: Ministry, Media, Moore, and Money. In each case I can report much hard thought and prayer; in each case I can report hard decisions being taken; in each case the decisions are forced on us by our commitment to the Mission; in each case the decisions are going to be hard to implement, but healthy for all. I look back over the year's work in good heart.

But what next? I am reminded of Winston Churchill's famous words after the Battle of El Alamein in 1942: 'Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning'. A few minutes ago, in summing up where we are with Mission I said that there are signs that it is working; but the signs are also consistent with the view that we have now picked the easy fruit and that everything else will be hard. Frankly, I do not read it in the latter way – I have been so encouraged again and again by people reporting initiatives to me, that I think we are going ahead.

Only recently, for example, I was at Barker College. As a direct result of taking up the challenge of the Diocesan Mission, the Council, the Head, the Chaplain and the fine Christian studies staff have an aim: 50% of the students in voluntary Christian groups at least twice a month. What a great goal! And what a great encouragement to know that the figures are already 30%. It is the quiet determination of so many like the Barker team, (and I could mention the people at the Schools Corporation, ARV and Anglicare, all of whom have started churches), to see people come to know Jesus which gives me great heart. I want our web-site to be a place which carries such stories and ideas so that we will all be encouraged.

On the other hand, human nature is such that we can become tired, bored or diverted and lose our zest. Furthermore, there is truth in the contention that a number of our early successes were on the way before we began the Mission. More than that, I am aware that there are many parishes – perhaps up to a third – for which life is a struggle. Financial resource, and especially human resources are limited and with the best will in the world, the parish leadership has not been able to see how to take any initiative in Mission. Not least they have the problems of multicultural Australia before them. Other parishes began something new, but the initiative has not worked. What now?

One strength of our system is in the independence of the parishes. Local initiatives are worth far more than diocesan or even regional ones. Can I say, that in the present climate, failure is success. If your initiative has not worked, or has not worked yet, take heart. There will be many experiments which languish; on those experiences success may be built. The other strength of our system is that it is a network of resource. We can benefit from others, at least in ideas and training, if not in financial and human assistance. How can we best combine local with network?

In 2004 we had four M's; the strategy for 2005 is to be the year of 'P'. We have reached the precise point in the story of the beginning of the Mission when as a Diocese we need to give attention to four P's: Parishes, Persons, Preaching and Prayer.

### **Parishes**

The local parish remains the chief arena of the Mission. So far, quite a number have fired up and started new things; strategies are being worked on; challenges being laid; new ministries begun. But, as I have already indicated, others with the best will in the world, have found it hard to start or to maintain Mission. The impression in some places is that we are 'on hold' as far as engaging in the Mission is concerned. The task for 2005 – and, of course, in the years that follow - will be to translate the Mission into effective practice in such parishes. We were not ready for this in the first two years; we need to be ready for it next year and in the succeeding years. Challenging and helping parishes for mission will be a permanent state of being in the Diocese from now on.

As I began to plan this, I thought that we needed a new organisation devoted to helping parishes to apply the Mission locally. Then I realised how wasteful such an approach would be. After all, God has blessed us with four wonderful units for help in Mission. First, there is the Research and Planning Unit at Anglicare. They are able to answer almost any question that I care to put to them, except what to buy my wife for Christmas. They are available both for Diocesan and Parish research. Second, there is the Department of Mission at Moore College; indeed the whole College is a formidable research and in-service training tool for Mission. The Library alone is awesome – especially if it had a decent building! But Michael Raiter and the others in the College will continue to provide the theological and missiological thinking for the Mission. The work of both these departments will be linked to the new web-site.

For my third resource, I turn to Evangelism Ministries. In doing so I want to acknowledge with gratitude to God the role played by David Mansfield over ten years in EM. But I have put before EM the challenge that as well as providing evangelists and evangelistic training in the Diocese, it also gives sustained attention to helping parishes to move into Mission mode. I know that the organisation under David has already been doing this; we now need to do it with even more focus and skill than hitherto. It must be the chief instrument for helping parishes.

The fourth resource is the team of ten who have been dedicated by the Diocese to care for the Regions. I mean of course, the Bishops and Archdeacons. This is the group that made the following solemn promise: 'In submission to the word of the Lord Jesus, the Archbishop and Bishops of the Diocese have committed themselves in unity of heart and spirit to give example, energy and leadership to this Mission.' Nor is it any good for the Archdeacons to hide away – they are specifically included also. Nor can the Archbishop hide; nor can the Archdeacon for women's ministry! The bishops and archdeacons are also joined to the list of those available and willing to help parishes move forward in the Mission; indeed, part of their job is to ask questions, encourage, inform and inspire.

Dear brothers and sisters. Look at what God has provided for us in all this – and actually, I have not mentioned the half. Mind you, we live in a highly secular society in which mission is hard work. To be equipped to help you, most of these folk are going to be at a week-long conference in early November, thinking through what I can only call 'the science of parishes' – I can't think of a better title. I don't think that we have ever done any proper research on the life-cycle of parishes and how they work and don't work. The Mission has forced us to ask some pretty awkward questions about how we operate; I hope that this is the sort of material which will be available to all on the web-site.

### **Persons**

About the subject of Persons, I am going to say little tonight. I am talking about Policy 3 and the challenge to raise up and train ministers of the gospel. It will be a feature of 2005; humanly speaking, we need to see a surge in this area if we are to reach our community: and opportunities are opening up all around Australia and elsewhere. Realistically, each region of the Diocese needs to send 50 people into training each year. Obviously for some parishes this will not be possible; for others it will be possible to send many more. That is the beauty of the regional approach. At the parish level I ought to mention that the quiet and important work of training goes on, and I hope that we are taking advantage of it to train and equip every member – I refer to such training opportunities as are provided through Mary Andrews College, the Diocesan women's team, and EM, who will be running special training in May next year.



## **Prayer and Preaching**

As I turn to Prayer and Preaching, let me ask a prior question: do you think that our community needs the gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you agree with me that the greatest gift we Anglicans can give to this nation is Bible-based churches?

As the year began we had an interesting controversy sparked by Prime Minister Howard about values in education and why it was that parents were choosing independent schools. The last thing I would want to do is to denigrate our state school system; I think that there is room for both systems and I note with great satisfaction that we have something like 140,000 children in scripture each week. My interest is at another level. What does this massive parental concern tell us about how our children are travelling in this sort of society?

In a recent address, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg<sup>1</sup>, a distinguished Adolescent Psychologist has given a startling picture of today's teenager. He talks about society's problems being reflected in the classroom, and describes many students as 'growing up in a psychological wasteland, without nurturing or support'; 'Every day of the week, 13-year-old children make decisions adults used to make for them...'. Observing the massive information overload, with its absence of wisdom, he says, 'Never before have young people been told so much and never before have they known so little.' Under the impact of marketeers they have become, 'greedy little adults'.

Dr Carr-Gregg reports, 'In my capacity as Agony Uncle for Girlfriend magazine, hundreds of 11-14 year old girls write each month of the anguish they feel following the dissolution of their families. Their letters are awash with a mixture of apprehension and confusion about their future and the changing relationships that surround them.' He observes, 'In contrast to the young people of the Middle Ages, who knew they had an immortal soul enclosed in the shell of a mortal body, surrounded daily by evidence of death and dying – Stripped of community, tradition, and shared meaning, many of our young people are spiritual anorexics – empty selves that are fundamentally a disappointment and nature abhors a vacuum so they feel this urge to fill the void, soothed and made coherent by consumer products, celebrity news, and never-ending quests for physical perfection.'

Dr Carr-Gregg is even prepared to liken the current situation to the abuse of children during the industrial revolution: 'The question is whether or not we are actually standing on the brink of yet another ghastly era for our young people, a period that will be qualitatively different but potentially as serious.' A number of the senior educators I have spoken to this year are equally concerned. 'Concerned'...it's a typical academic bureaucratic word, isn't it? We are talking of emptiness, of misery, of pain and suffering, of blighted lives and lives blighted to affect generations yet to come; we are talking of tens of thousands of people hurt by the spiritual failure of our society and the failure of the churches to communicate the word which will transform lives and bring healing on its wings.

I said earlier, that our gift to this nation and its future is Bible-based churches. We have become used to thinking that the good health of the nation depends upon the Commonwealth Government and how it spends our money. People seem to think that it is the business of the churches to complain vociferously about the government. I have no doubt that government is a vital institution of our nation and that we are vitally interested in the good and evil that it may do. I have no doubt also that there will be times when Christians will need to speak out about matters to do with government policy.

But in this highly individualistic and loveless society, with challenges facing us beyond any we have ever seen before, the answer to teenage problems is not going to be found merely in government initiatives. The problems Dr Carr-Gregg has described are spiritual problems; profound spiritual problems. In the final analysis, they will only be met in the biblical gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the fellowship of God's people. It is there that people will find the meaning, purpose, belonging and hope that Dr Carr-Gregg points to as missing from the lives of these spiritual anorexics.

I keep saying 'Bible-based churches' with good reason. It may be thought that a Mission which calls for the multiplication of congregations, fellowships and churches is all about an increase in membership. It may be thought that our strategy conferences and talks about 'the science of parishes' and how we should welcome others in, are premised on the belief that as long as we do these things results will flow. It may even be thought that what we are on about is political and social power in having access to larger numbers of people. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. Our hope is that those who join our churches as members will be joined to Jesus Christ, will become new Christians, not merely new members.

Strangely, however, not all the churches are clear about what it is that makes new Christians, and in the fuss associated with mission we may also forget. If we follow the teaching of the Bible, we discover that new Christians are the fruit of God's word blessed by the Spirit of God. God is responsible for the multiplication of Christians; his chosen, normal method for saving people is through the preaching of his word, blessed by his Spirit. That is why, as we seek to do his will, as we seek to mission in our part of the world, our fundamental method remains always the same: preaching the word and prayer for the Spirit. This is the method which God blesses.

Bible-based churches are the churches which promote and live by this method. A Bible-based church, true to its Reformation heritage, will meet in order to seek the leadership of the Lord Jesus Christ expressed through his word; their liturgies and services will be shaped by and filled by the scriptures; their prayers and songs likewise; the reading and exposition of the Bible will be fundamental to the gathering; their fellowship will embrace and be dictated to by the teaching of scripture.

Dr Carr-Gregg speaks of the difficulty that young people have of finding meaning, purpose and belonging, and says, 'Hope can be a rare commodity if life becomes episodic, lacks coherence, continuity and predictability.' His diagnosis could have been written in view of what the gospel offers young people by way of meaning, hope and belonging; of what it offers by way of a coherent story about who we are, and where we are, and what we are, and where we shall be, and above all, Who we have been created for.

If the children are like this, it is because the parents have the same problems. They have not been able to communicate a vision of life, a true gospel to their children. Are you not moved by this? Does it not grieve you, to hear of the state of things? Are you not filled with pity for those who are already experiencing what it is to be lost? It was love which reached down and saved you – do you not share a glimmer of that love for the ones who need also to be saved? Our forebears were deeply moved and moved to action by the sufferings of children in the industrial revolution: shall we not be moved by the pain of the men and women, boys and girls, of this generation?

All of us are servants of the word of God, committed to the communication of the word throughout God's world. Some of us have the added heavy responsibility of being the appointed preachers of God's word amongst God's people. Given the centrality of the word, I intend in 2005 to keep raising the question of how well we preach, how well we communicate the word of God. I have theological concerns I wish to share with you – for example I am concerned that we have lost sense of the significance of the Law of God both for bringing home the gospel and for guiding Christian behaviour. Likewise, I am concerned about the place of the kingdom of God in our understanding of the message of scripture as a whole. My hope is that our appointed preachers in particular will seek to improve the manner and matter of preaching, to the glory of God.

All of which will be utterly fruitless – unless we see the blessing of the Spirit of God on our sharing of his word. This is true in the Bible Study group, in the evangelistic endeavour, in the Scripture class, in the youth group, in the sermon, in the personal evangelistic moment. Dear brothers and sisters: we have accomplished so much! We can see the blessing of God on our work. We see new schools, new fellowships, new retirement villages, new church plants, new energy, new Christians. We give God thanks!

But, and I speak as your chief pastor: we have yet to see a new spirit of prayer. We have yet to face this challenge. That is why, now that the third year of the Mission has arrived we are giving attention to this at a formal level. As you know, Reg Piper has set up a company of prayer warriors for the Mission and we pray using the Mission website. This is an advance for which we give God thanks. But it is only a skirmish into the territory of unbelief so far. With Sarah Plummer, Reg has arranged for a far more significant challenge to be taken up next year, and of course the new web-site is going to be of great assistance here. We are all going to have to become far more adept at posting prayer requests.

Next year's program, 'Forty days with the Risen Lord' is intended to encourage us all in prayer. It will all be useless, unless there is a spirit of prayer, a repentance before the Lord, lives changed to become more prayerful. But here we return to preaching the word. In the Number One Policy of the Mission, prayer and preaching cannot be separated. Indeed, according to Policy One, it is the Spirit-blessed preaching of the word which will so persuade us – we who already belong to Christ – of the love of God in Christ that we will 'seek to please the Saviour in all things, manifest the godly life and be filled with prayerful and sacrificial compassion for the lost in all the world'. One of the chief ministries of the Spirit is to assure us of the love of God through understanding the word of God and this will result in glad service of God. According to Policy One we are to call upon God for an outpouring of his Spirit so that his people will be assured through his word.

If our prayer-lives remain weak it is because we are still to be overwhelmed by the message of God's love in Christ. I therefore call on all of us for a special season of prayer between now and Easter, - in *preparation* for the forty

days with the risen Lord. Of course we can and should pray for many things. But I am asking that we pray constantly, specifically, faithfully, earnestly for the outpouring of the Spirit in blessing on the preaching of God's word. I also call upon all who preach to ensure that their people are assured by the word of God that their sins are forgiven through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that this will require a deeper consideration of the law of God and its role in defining and rebuking sin and I believe that you should give special attention to this first of all personally, and then in your congregation.

In the normal course of events, this is the last session of the 46<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Sydney. A great change has occurred in Synod itself. We have acted on the idea that the Synod is a body where the representatives of the churches meet to discuss and decide matters of mutual concern. Many of the old hands will tell you that Synod has become a different, a more interesting, a more fruitful experience.

Of course, the highpoint of the 46<sup>th</sup> Synod, its defining moment was that night when by an overwhelming majority of members, it set its hand on a covenant to engage in the ten year Diocesan Mission. Whatever history may record, they can't take that away from you. In doing so, whether you knew it or not, you were voting in favour of making our Church take its place as an Australian church in this nation. And my prayer is, that as a result, and as a result of the energies you unleashed that night, and as a result of prayer and the word, dozens, tens, scores, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands – yes even hundreds of thousands of new Christians of all races - will praise the name of Jesus Christ throughout all generations, for ever and ever, Amen.

### **In the Diocese**

I am thankful to God for the faithful ministry of those who have retired this year from full-time service.

The retirees were: the Rev Barry J Bevis, Rector of Hornsby; the Rev Canon Allan M Blanch, Rector of St Philip's York Street; the Rev J Neil Brain, Curate-in-Charge of Culburra Beach; the Ven Ernie W Carnaby, Archdeacon of North Sydney; the Rev Russell H Carnaby, Chaplain of Cumberland Hospital; the Rev John E Davies, Rector of Northbridge; the Rev Terry H Dicks, Rector of Waverley; the Rev Canon Howard F Dillon, Executive Director of Anglicare; the Rev Michael L Hamaty, Curate-in-Charge of South Creek; the Rev Dr Bruce N Kaye, General Secretary of the General Synod Office of the Anglican Church of Australia; the Rev John W Reimer, Rector of Leura; the Rev R Gordon Robinson, Rector of Bondi; the Rev (Tony) A G Tress, Director of Chaplains of Anglicare.

In addition, those who died were: the Rev C Eric W Bellingham; the Rev Frank J Diacon; Deaconess Pat Jarrett; the Rev (Bob) R L Milne; the Rev (Bill) W H Ostling; the Rev Jeffrey M L Parsons; the Rev (Tony) A R Wood, Rector of Bankstown.

I am sure you join with me in expressing our sincere sympathy to their families and our trust in the One who is the God of all comfort.

Peter F Jensen  
**Archbishop**

<sup>1</sup> Dr Michael Carr-Gregg's recent address was the Wells Oration 2004 for the Junior School Heads' Association of Australia Ltd (JSHAA). His paper is available through their website, [www.jshaa.asn.au](http://www.jshaa.asn.au)