

Third Ordinary Session of the 50th Synod of the Diocese of Sydney: October 2016

Presidential Address

Delivered by Dr Glenn Davies, Archbishop of Sydney, on Monday 10 October 2016.

Members of Synod, brothers and sisters, saints of the Most High, welcome to the third session of the 50th Synod of the Diocese of Sydney.

As we gather together in the presence of God, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet. In his wisdom and love, our heavenly Father gave this estate to the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Upon this land they met for generations until the coming of British settlers. As we continue to learn to live together on these ancestral lands, we acknowledge and pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and pray that God will unite us all in a knowledge of his Son, in whom all things were created, in heaven and on earth, whether visible or invisible—for all things have been created through him and for him.

This, of course, is our last session of the 50th Synod and for some of you this might be your last session of Synod—even if you don't know it—as fresh elections will take place at parish AGMs next year. Yet whether it be three years or thirty-three years, I want to thank you all for your service to the Diocese by your membership and participation in the processes of Synod. Not all of you have spoken, though many of you have—apart from the usual suspects. Yet participation is not merely having the opportunity to speak, it is more significant that you have opportunity to hear, to listen to debate, to weigh the arguments presented, to allow yourself to be persuaded or not, as the case may be, and then to vote with confidence and courage in accordance with your conscience and your convictions. Sometimes your vote may not be with the majority, other times it will. Yet our fellowship is not defined by our universal agreement on every matter that comes before this house. It is defined by our unity in Christ, our commitment to love him and to serve him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. This is the strength of synodical government, where opinions can be expressed without fear or favour, knowing that we are loved as members of a family whose ultimate responsibility is to our heavenly Father. I know that Synod has not always been like this, but I sense a growth and maturity in our debates and in our love for each other. May such love, even when expressed in disagreement be an ever growing characteristic of our sessions, indeed of all our diocesan dealings.

Of course, when we do agree on a particular matter it is a sweet expression of our being of one heart and mind. It was therefore with great pleasure that when we last met to approve the merger of Anglican Retirement Villages and Anglicare it resulted in a unanimous vote of approval. This was the result of much hard work, which was clearly evident to the Synod and has resulted in a stronger, larger and more robust organisation better equipped to face the challenges of the future with the combined resources of two great organisations undergirded by the power of the gospel to transform human lives. Early signs of the amalgamation under a new board and a new CEO in Mr Grant Millard are very positive, though we should never underestimate the challenges that they face as they seek to honour Jesus Christ, enrich lives and strengthen communities.

The Laity

Our Synod, like our church, is made up of laity and clergy. Although the origin of 'laity' comes from the Greek word *laikos*, meaning 'of the people', it has come to mean Christians who are not in holy orders. The origin of 'clergy' is not as certain, but would appear to be derived from the Greek word *kleros*, meaning 'lot', thus describing a portion of the people set apart for an office. However, the contribution of both laity and clergy enables our churches to flourish and our organisations to prosper. I am constantly amazed and regularly impressed by the commitment of time, energy and expertise that lay people give to the work of our Diocese. Most often through boards of governance or school councils, but also as employees within our many organisations, let alone serving as wardens, parish councillors, nominators or Synod representatives. These labours are not in vain, and I thank God for the gifts he has given to his people in our Diocese so that the body of Christ might be strengthened and opportunities for the love of Christ to be displayed throughout our cities and suburbs, so that Christ might be honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community.

Last year we passed an ordinance authorising lay ministry in our churches. This was a significant ordinance as we collectively recognised the importance of authorising lay ministers and other laypeople who have opportunities for public ministry in the congregation, so that members of the congregation could be assured that those ministering among them were duly qualified and appropriately authorised. Not all lay ministry needs to be authorised by the Archbishop, as many ministries, like Sunday School teachers, may be exercised with

the sole permission of the rector, though Working with Children Checks are still mandatory for all those ministering among children and young people. Yet where a person administers baptism, conducts funerals or regularly preaches, they will need to be authorised. This honours both the person ministering as well as the congregation, as each person so authorised commits themself to the teachings of the Anglican Church. I mention these matters because the Ordinance allowed a period of grace which will expire at the end of this year, after which all rectors will need to comply with the provisions of the Ordinance. This is not for bureaucratic efficiency or some misguided centralism, rather it is to highlight the importance and gravity of the public teaching of God's word. Our people should be assured that those who so minister God's word are duly qualified and have the imprimatur of the Archbishop. This ordinance was only passed because the laity and the clergy agreed to pass it last year and accordingly I gave my assent. The governance of the Diocese is the responsibility of the Synod as it governs the activities of the parishes and also the rectors. That is why I place a high priority on Synod attendance, especially for rectors, so that they can take their part in the decisions that will govern their ministry. It is no good complaining, if you don't turn up.

The Clergy

Of course, all Anglican ministry within our parishes is overseen and regulated by the rector. That also is our polity. A wise and godly rector will seek to promote the gifts of God's people so that the whole congregation might be edified. The teaching and training of our lay people ought to be high priorities for the clergy. Mission 2020 helpfully expresses this responsibility in our first three priorities.

Priority 1 Reach all the lost in our Diocese with the life-giving gospel of Christ

Priority 2 Deepen spiritual maturity among our members

Priority 3 Equip our members to exercise their gifts

Although the Synod may set the policy, as it has for the authorisation of lay ministry, it is the local rector whose responsibility it is to appoint faithful people to exercise certain ministries, some of which require authorisation, while others do not, though all who exercise their gifts will need training, encouragement and support. This is especially the case for those who regularly preach, where the Moore College PTC ought to be a minimum qualification.

Despite some heated debate in recent years, in 2015 the Synod reaffirmed the policy that it is appropriate for qualified women to preach in our churches. This is not new, since it dates back to the time of Archbishop John Charles Wright, when the first ordinance allowing women to preach was passed by the Synod. The recognition of lay ministry has a long history in our Diocese, and the *Authorisation of Lay Ministry Ordinance 2015* has its origin in the *Women's Work in the Church Ordinance 1922*, later replaced in 1981 by the *Deaconesses, Lay Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance*, which is the immediate antecedent of our current ordinance. While different rectors will have different views on the ministry of women, I trust that we shall all express our views with charity, warmth and winsomeness towards those with whom we disagree. This must not become a shibboleth for identifying 'true believers' among us. Paul Barnett's commentary on Philippians 2 provides a salutary reminder of what it means to have the same mind.

It scarcely needs mentioning that Paul is not calling for some drab uniformity where the members were to hold identical views on everything. To the contrary, Paul is appealing to their common unity *in Christ*... 'Selfish ambition' means 'creating a faction', an act that is clearly divisive... It is the opposite to 'being of the same mind, having the same love' (v 2).¹

Although it is the rector's responsibility to determine who will preach to his congregation, we should not misrepresent the views of the Synod in the question of who may preach in our churches. While the Synod has clearly expressed its view on several occasions that women should not be ordained to the presbyterate in our Diocese, it has equally confirmed its view that women may preach in our Diocese, within the apostolic parameters of 1 Timothy 2:12. This is reflected in various reports of the Doctrine Commission and resolutions of the Synod, most notably in 2007.

Synod —

- (a) gives thanks to God for the gifted and diverse ministry of women in the Diocese of Sydney, including women currently licensed to preach in the Diocese, and
- (b) notes that congregations under the leadership of their rectors and parish councils are free to determine the make-up of their ministry team within the framework of our diocesan ordinances, and

¹ Paul Barnett, *Philippians & Philemon* (Sydney South: Aquila Press, 2016), 49-50.

- (c) calls for parishes and parish members who differ on aspects of the exercise of ministry by women to continue to show generosity to one another.

Resolution 2/07

Our greatest resources are our people—men and women, who have been captivated by the love of God and have brought their lives into conformity with his word and seek opportunities to see Christ honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community. From our lay people come our clergy, those who are called to serve Christ as pastors and teachers of his word. I am so grateful for the men and women whose gifts for leadership and service have been recognised by their local church, who have devoted themselves to the concentrated study of God's word, and answered God's call to give themselves to full-time gospel ministry. This vocation is not for all. Other vocations have equal value in God's sight, but this vocation plays a special part in the economy of God's grace, through the proclamation of his word to the community of faith and to an unbelieving world.

It is a challenging vocation nonetheless. Yet I am heartened by the number of men and women who offer themselves for candidature for ordination. It is a serious business to be a pastor of God's people and the four years of theological training at Moore College, with attention to the original languages of the Bible, provides an excellent foundation for a lifetime of ministry. If you pass by King Street, Newtown you will see a new building now completed on the corner of Carillon Avenue soaring six stories high. It will provide the physical resources that we need for the next fifty years, with ample space to house our world class library, a larger gathering place for the students, as well as purpose-built areas for the staff and faculty. Within the campus of Moore College, Youthworks College will relocate as from January 2017. This too is an exciting development, as it will bring the training of youth and children's ministers into closer proximity to the resources of Moore College, while still remaining a separate entity under the leadership of its Principal, the Reverend Dr Bill Salier. I should add that the need for youth and children's ministers is still great in our Diocese, though the labourers are few. I would encourage all our parishes to identify those with gifts in this area to consider whether it is their vocation either as ordained or lay ministers to bring the gospel to the young hearts and minds of the next generation.

The Bachelor of Divinity degree provides a solid theological foundation for full-time paid ministry, but there is still much to learn in the course of exercising such a ministry. The role of Ministry, Training and Development (MT&D), is essential to this task, as it undertakes a three year Ministry Development program for those who graduate into paid ministry, whether lay or ordained. However, MT&D is under resourced and cannot fulfil its mandate to offer continuing development. For this reason, I am grateful for the Centre of Ministry Development at Moore College, which assists MT&D in various ways and has developed in consultation with the bishops a program for new rectors. This will commence next year and will operate as a two year program for 'Developing Rectors'. It aims to equip new rectors with a range of skills for the diverse and complex realities of leading a parish, or as one wag described it, 'revving up rectors'. I am delighted with this initiative and trust that it will be of great benefit to rectors as they address the array of issues of modern parish life, centred on prayer and the teaching of God's word, but developing relevant strategies for making disciples and maturing disciples.

Another initiative for enhancing the leadership capabilities of rectors and the support services to the parishes has been a set of strategic conversations. In July and August over a hundred rectors met in Mission Area meetings with their regional bishop and an external advisor with a view to developing strategies for meeting the challenges of 21st century ministry. Ten meetings were held across the Diocese for this exercise, which has revealed some interesting outcomes as rectors addressed the characteristics of a flourishing church and the gaps that need to be bridged to reach the ideal. Further discussion centred upon how the diocesan leadership could assist parishes. Having heard the concerns of rectors, the regional bishops and I are now analysing the initial phase of this process so that we can respond to the concerns raised and seek to implement some of the suggestions that have arisen. Some items are perennial, such as the burden of regulations and compliance, issues of property and insurance. Some items, which are already in delivery-mode, appeared not to have fully resonated with all rectors, while other items are in the planning stage, such as developing first time rectors, revisiting rector tenure and improving data bases. The regional bishops in consultation with rectors and Mission Area leaders shall explore these issues over the next six months with a view to implementation.

Full-time paid ministry is a great privilege and honour. Seeing people converted, seeing the saints built up in their faith, proclaiming the gospel, and engaging with the community on social issues and social welfare can be both exhilarating and exhausting. Sadly, there are pitfalls and dangers for clergy. In the past three years, for example, ten clergy have needed time out of parish in order to come to terms with episodes of depression, burnout, anxiety, personal conflict or other mental health issues, apart from those who have suffered medical setbacks, such as Bishop Ivan Lee.

This might be an appropriate opportunity, on behalf of Bishop Lee to express my thanks for all your prayers for him over the past year. Ivan was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last October and underwent extensive surgery. This was a complex but successful operation and one for which we thank God as we do the six months of chemotherapy that followed. Unfortunately, only 20 to 25 percent of people with pancreatic cancer survive longer than twelve months. So we thank God that Ivan is within this narrow statistic. Although Bishop Lee still has hurdles to mount along the way, his most recent scan evidenced no presence of the cancer and with renewed energy he is back to full time ministry. I am grateful for the prayers of so many across the Diocese, not just the Western Region, for Ivan's recovery and we pray that God will continue to bless him with vigour and good health for many years to come. Ivan has been well supported by his wife Virginia and their three daughters during this harrowing time, as well by the Reverend Neil Atwood, his Executive Assistant, who has shouldered additional responsibilities during Ivan's sickness. Prayer is one of God's gifts of grace, which is essential for all our ministry, as it reminds us of our complete dependence upon God for how we live—or whether we live. Such miracles of healing are a fresh reminder of God's love for us and of his desire that we continue to live for him and through him for his glory alone.

Yet we live in a world of sickness, where God does not always answer our prayers for healing. This is not due to lack of faith on our part, nor the inadequacies of our prayers, but is due to God's wondrous purposes for our lives and his glory. As the apostle Paul declared, he had 'complete boldness, so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or death; for to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain' (Philippians 1:20-21). Paul was mission-minded and as he sought to glorify God in his ministry, life and death were of secondary importance to the exaltation of Christ. Paul was all too aware of the weakness of his mortal flesh, the uncertainties of life, the ferocity of persecution and the thorn in the flesh that was an encumbrance to his well being. I have no doubt that Paul was diligent in resting one day a week, in accordance with God's design for human life in anticipation of entering God's heavenly rest, however, he was also subject to enforced seasons of rest, at the pleasure of the Emperor's officials.

Sometimes our bodies suffer from overwork or stress; sometimes they suffer because we have been indolent in self-care; and sometimes they suffer for inexplicable reasons. Whatever the reason, it is not a cause for reprimand, as much as cause for care and concern. I am grateful for the insurance policies that we have for sickness and accident benefits, but also stipend continuance when a member of the clergy is unable to function and yet can continue to receive a stipend without burdening the parish. Apart from the clergy's immediate family, I believe it is the congregation's first duty to care for their pastors. The care of the Levites in the Old Testament was placed upon the nation of Israel as a whole. The care of leaders under the new covenant is placed upon those whom they serve. Yet sometimes members of the congregation are at a loss to know how to help their pastor, or are oblivious to the minister's need for help. Bishops also have a role in exercising pastoral care towards their clergy, though in my experience, clergy are not always comfortable in exposing their vulnerability to their episcopal overseers. We have also seen more and more examples of burnout, isolation anxiety, low self esteem, stress and depression in recent years.

For these reasons we launched the Clergy Assistance Program (CAP) last April. The scheme allows members of the clergy to access trained Anglicare counsellors on a confidential basis for an initial conversation. It further provides up to six sessions each year for professional counselling and, where appropriate, other professional support. The cost of these sessions is not borne by the client but by the parishes as a whole through their parish cost recovery contribution.

I have been delighted by this initiative which has already produced results. Within the first three months of the launch of CAP, 24 clergy have accessed the program and received assistance. Sometimes the assistance has been a one-off conversation, for others it has developed into formal sessions of counselling. The accessibility and the confidentiality of the program has been hailed by all concerned as a significant step forward in our care for clergy. However, it is only part of the story, as both congregations and regional bishops have their part to play in caring for clergy, so that the body of Christ might be built up, strengthened and equipped to be disciples of Christ demonstrating his love in word and deed. A helpful resource in this area is Christopher Ash's recently published *Zeal without Burnout. Seven Keys to a Lifelong Ministry of Sustainable Sacrifice* which I and the regional bishops have read and readily commend to others.

Other matters concerning the welfare of clergy are in our business paper, which I commend for your consideration, including the Parental Leave for Clergy Ordinance, which seeks to bridge the gap between our treatment of lay ministers and our treatment of clergy with appropriate leave available to assist the nurture of their children in the early years.

Anglicans in Australian Society

In August this year we all participated in the Commonwealth Census—that is, if we could get online on August 9. Australia is well served by this collection of data as it reveals trends in the changing face of our society. Of particular interest to us will be the percentage of those who identify as Christians, which in 2011 was 61%. The push for Australians to mark 'No religion' may have its effect on this statistic for 2016, especially as the 'No religion' option was placed first in answer to 'What is the person's religion?' While it is true that 61% does not translate into that percentage of Australians who attend a Christian church, the statistic is still a significant pointer as to where people see themselves, and how well we are penetrating the atheism, agnosticism and non-Christian religions of Australian culture.

Our own National Church Life Survey (NCLS) will also be held later this year. This too is a very important research tool for understanding our progress in the gospel, both among our own people and among those in our communities. I am expecting that every church in the Diocese will be involved in this survey. Mission 2020 has been designed with four priorities, each of them with measurable outcomes based upon the NCLS statistics. Census taking is a regular feature of the history of God's people, in fact the fourth book of Moses bears the name 'Numbers' for this very reason. While counting numbers can easily lead to pride, a humble account of the number of people attending our church, together with an analysis of their views concerning the vitality of church life is an invaluable resource. It would be a sad day indeed, if we were to neglect participation on the basis that the results are always depressing, as one Australian bishop said at a national gathering some years ago. NCLS has an established international reputation for competent, evidence-based research and our contribution to that process ought to be embraced by us all. A glance at the NCLS metrics in the opening page of Synod Book 1 will highlight the importance of keeping us accountable to our mission in each of the four priorities.

The recent revelations in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse hearings in Hobart and Newcastle is salutary reading for all Anglicans. Regrettably poor procedures, defective advice, inadequate record-keeping and flawed leadership have contributed to the impression that Anglican churches are not safe places for children and young people. While we may respond that Anglican cases of child sexual abuse are a small proportion of other cases of institutional abuse, and far fewer than those in the Roman Catholic Church, the reality remains that we have failed in this area. One case of sexual abuse against a child is one too many. While we have improved our procedures, increased awareness and training for all church workers, we have lost ground in the collective consciousness of the Australian society.

I believe that this reputational damage is a contributing factor to the rising opposition to the influence of Christianity in our country, most noticeably seen in the national debate about same-sex marriage. This very week will see whether or not the Labor Party will accept the Government's mandate to hold a plebiscite on this issue next February. For my own part, as I said last year, I believe a plebiscite is justified as a legitimate process for determining such a fundamental change to the definition of marriage that has well served humanity since the dawn of civilisation, that is, when God first designed marriage for the benefit of human society. It is hard to understand the virulent opposition to a plebiscite, usually based upon its cost, its departure from our normal democratic processes where decisions are made by parliament and the inevitable hate speech it will generate. However, democracy comes at a cost, if you believe the will of the people is worthy of being heard. That it is a departure, though not unprecedented, from normal parliamentary decision-making merely reflects the magnitude of the issue and its consequences for every Australian. As for the propensity for hate speech, it must sadly be conceded that certain parts of our society resort to hate speech, when they are incapable of advancing an articulate defence of their position. Moreover, this equally applies to those on both sides of the debate. As Christians we abhor such behaviour and as participants in this discussion we should always be models of calm and reasoned discourse with anyone and everyone, especially those with whom we disagree.

Furthermore, if people are to vote intelligently they need to understand the consequences. My request for equal funding of both sides of the question, which I put to the Prime Minister in our meeting with Heads of Churches in February this year, was premised upon the ever present bias towards the 'Yes' case in our media and the reprehensible censure of views which simply uphold the current law. On behalf of the Heads of Churches, I also gave a commitment that we would abide by whatever outcome the plebiscite might deliver and we would expect parliament to legislate, if the nation voted 'Yes'. That would mean significant adjustment for us as Christians, to live in a land where the definition of marriage is contrary to the Bible's teaching, but this would make us more like first century Christians, whose beliefs were counter-cultural. At the moment the plebiscite proposal is in the balance. Hopefully we shall know more next week when Bishop Michael Stead addresses this issue and our response as a diocese to the question of redefining marriage.

The society in which we live presents challenges of unbelief and outright hostility to the Word of God, of which our commission from the risen Jesus is still as pressing as it was when first delivered—to make disciples of all

nations. The fourth priority of Mission 2020 is to 'Respond to the Changing Face of our Society'. Our engagement in the public debate on same-sex unions is one such response. However, other questions such as gambling, domestic violence, asylum seekers and refugees are all issues in which we can bring the grace of God and the love of God into the market place of ideas. Of special mention here is our commitment towards the Syrian refugees, which we launched last year under the auspices of Anglicare, and a report on the progress of this enterprise may be found in Standing Committee's Supplementary Report to the Synod.

Last year I launched New Churches for New Communities (NCNC), a project for raising money to build new facilities for the growing edges of Greater Sydney in the north-west and south-west sectors. Synod had graciously agreed to approve a land levy upon each parish for the purchase of new land in these areas. The Mission Property Committee has secured five sizeable blocks for future growth and a DA has been lodged for a new building at Stanhope Gardens to commence construction mid 2017. To date NCNC has raised \$1.6 million and it is expected that we are on target for our budget of \$2.5 million by the end of the year. I am grateful for the skills and commitment of the Reverend Glenn Gardner who has worked assiduously on this project, as I am for the generous gifts of so many Anglicans towards making this vision a reality. We have a strategy for the ongoing purchase of land, a strategy for the establishment of a building for a church community. We have a strategy for raising up able church planters for these new congregations. The only gaps in funding our growth strategies is in church planting in urban areas and in the redevelopment of existing urban church buildings to accommodate the growing urban population in our Diocese. Much preliminary work has been done on these items which Bishop Peter Lin and the Reverend Raj Gupta will respectively commend to the Synod for its consideration.

Abraham is described as a stranger and sojourner in a foreign country, with the only real estate to his name being the cave of Machpelah, the burial site he purchased for Sarah. Yet he was 'looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God' (Hebrews 11:10). The apostle Peter describes his readers as aliens and exiles, strangers and sojourners. These are the characteristics of the people of God throughout the ages. We are merely passing through this transitory existence, for there is something more tangible, more real and more permanent awaiting us. In my own circumstances, since the sale of Bishopscourt earlier this year, my wife and I have become transients with no permanent place of abode. We are currently renting property in Haberfield, but we know we cannot get too comfortable, as our lease expires in six months time. Living with limited security is a new experience for us and when new premises for the Archbishop are found, we shall move again. Hopefully the next Archbishop will have a more permanent residence—though this too is illusory, as this world is not our final home. We are pilgrims on the move and must learn to hold our possessions lightly. For God has true permanence in store for his people in the new heavens and the new earth. Yet God has entrusted to us the message of the gospel for the salvation of the world. Even though the world is not worthy, God invites us to be engaged with the world; even though the world is opposed to the message of God's grace, God invites us to display God's grace; even though the world persecutes the bearers of good tidings, God empowers us by his Spirit to shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life.

In Mission 2020—

We commit[ed] ourselves afresh in prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit, to glorify God and love our neighbour by proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ, calling people to repent and living lives worthy of him.

May God so enrich our lives with love for the lost, that many will see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. May God be pleased to raise up more labourers for the harvest, that the gospel may be so clearly preached that men, women and children will trust in Jesus and be saved forever. May all that we do in this final session of our Synod bring glory to God, with our eyes firmly set upon the vision of Christ enthroned, honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community.

Dr Glenn Davies
Archbishop of Sydney

10 October 2016