

Frist Ordinary Session of the 52nd Synod of the Diocese of Sydney: May 2021

Presidential Address

Delivered by the Rt Rev Peter Hayward, Administrator of Sydney, on Monday 3 May 2021.

Members of Synod welcome to the first ordinary session of the 52nd Synod of the Diocese of Sydney.

When the 51st ordinary session concluded in October 2019, the Pandemic and the circumstances that have occurred over the last 19 months were not even remotely contemplated. Yet, in God's providence, we now meet for a one-day session of Synod. Immediately following this session will be a special session of the 52nd Synod to elect a new Archbishop. His kindness has given us the opportunity to keep going in the good to which he calls us.

As we gather in the presence of God, I acknowledge the traditional custodians 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 the 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.

Aboriginal Ministry

The existence of the City of Sydney and its foundation and growth is all a consequence of what occurred from the beginning of white settlement when Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their land. The first people of this nation possessed the resources on which Sydney and the nation was built.

In the earliest years of Sydney, the Aboriginal presence was visible, but the sad reality is that over time the Aboriginal people have been treated inhumanely, the consequences of which are yet to be resolved.

Recognising the importance of this matter, in 2019, Synod agreed to request the Doctrine Commission for a report on the biblical doctrine of reconciliation with special application to the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. As well, it approved the appointment of a task force to report to Synod in September 2021 with recommendations based on the report as to how the Diocese, parishes, individuals and organisations might move forward in this area.

From the very start of colonisation in 1788, Anglican Christians understood the need to bring the gospel to the peoples native to Australia. However, it is a sad fact that, as Tom Mayne writes in an unpublished essay, "not until the eve of the 20th century was there any real attempt to reach Sydney Aboriginal people with the gospel – and then, not as a result of any initiative by Sydney Anglicans, but by independent missionary agencies and the Church Army".

Dr Keith Cole, highly respected missionary, pastor and historian, wrote of Anglican attempts to minister to Aborigines across the intervening years:

"Generally speaking, Anglican congregations have not welcomed Aborigines in their churches, and conversely, Aborigines have not felt comfortable worshipping in formal places established by the white invader."

There is a little-understood truth about how many Aboriginal people perceive Anglicanism. Philip Miles, presently pastoral worker with the Shoalhaven Aboriginal Community Church, says, "There are inbuilt cultural aspects to Anglicanism which I believe will always make Indigenous ministry by Anglican churches more difficult than it might be for less hierarchical denominations or inter-denominational missions".

Acknowledging these observations, the Diocese of Sydney has actively engaged in taking the gospel to the First Nations People, within the geographic boundaries of the Diocese, in the second half of the last century.

In 1973 Bishop John Reid agitated vigorously for the commencement of a ministry to and by Aboriginal people in Redfern with Pastor Bill Bird's commission for ministry centred at the St Paul's Centre in George St Redfern, later known as Crossroads. As part of the Parish of Redfern for many years, it was home to a congregation, and the ministry led to the development of many Aboriginal pastors.

In 1996 Synod took a significant step in establishing the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples Ministry Committee (SAIPMC), the descendant of a task force on Aboriginal ministry set up by Archbishop Harry Goodhew. Synod set up a trust fund (then \$1.2m to be annually increased by an injection of 1% of the Synod Income) to enable the SAIPMC to do its work.

Synod should note that SAIPMC requires a majority of Aboriginal Christians to be appointed by the Archbishop to its membership and a majority of Aboriginal members to approve any Committee decision.

Since then, SAIPMC has been responsible for the commencement of a joint Anglican/Presbyterian ministry at Tregear (Mt Druitt Indigenous Church), the Macarthur Indigenous Church at Campbelltown and the Shoalhaven Aboriginal Community Church at Nowra. SAIPMC has assisted with ministers' financial support, but its meetings have consistently been a forum for networking, relationships, and encouragement. Alongside these ministries, work has grown in the Parish of Glebe and, under the oversight of ENC, at the Living Water Fellowship in Redfern.

Though small in numbers, as a diocese, we continue to encourage Aboriginal students to train at Anglican Deaconess Ministries, Youthworks College, and Moore College.

Links between the Indigenous churches and other churches and ministries have more recently developed, and some of our Diocesan schools have established Aboriginal campuses.

SAIPMC has worked hard at developing a partnership model between the Indigenous churches it supports and local parishes. As Campbelltown, Nowra and Minchinbury Parishes partner with Indigenous Churches, other Parishes are encouraged to formalise partnerships.

A pressing issue for Indigenous ministry in the Diocese is the raising up of the next generation of Aboriginal Christian leadership. There is currently an Australia-wide shortage of Aboriginal church leaders and lay leadership. SAIPMC is now focussing its resources on this issue. Pastor Michael Duckett has long planned to play his part in this, and in late 2018 the SAIPMC accepted the implementation of Michael's plan for an Aboriginal ministry and training centre. By the end of 2019, SAIPMC had spent some of its capital on the purchase of a 5-acre property at Wedderburn with a house and other buildings, which is being transformed into a fine, culturally appropriate facility. This is already proving to be a wonderful blessing to the large Aboriginal community in the Macarthur. The plan is that this place will serve his community with cultural training, but Michael's main passion is ministry training that is both biblically driven and culturally energised.

I am excited and confident in God that SAIPMC now has in place some fundamental structures, predominantly the initiatives of its Aboriginal members as to what they see as being appropriate for ministry to Aboriginal people in the Diocese. I also sense there is a greater willingness than ever before across the Diocese to support and share in ministry among and with Aboriginal people.

I express my thanks to Archdeacon Deryck Howell, who at this Synod will conclude as Chair of SAIPMC after six and a half years in the role. Pastor Michael Duckett will now Chair SAIPMC.

Episcopal leadership

Synod has not had an opportunity to express thanks for the life and ministry of Bishop Ivan Lee. With energy and passion, he served the Diocese as Bishop of Western Sydney. During his seventeen years as Bishop, he also had a particular focus on mission. He was involved in the establishment and strategic work of the Mission Property Committee and was the driving force behind the development of Mission Areas. During the period of his struggle with cancer, his indomitable enthusiasm was undiminished. His testimony of trusting in Jesus during cancer left an indelible mark across the Diocese. Synod expresses thanks to God for Ivan's service in our Diocese and extends our condolences to his wife Virginia and family, as well as our gratitude for faithfully serving with him.

Bishop Gary Koo was appointed to be Ivan's successor as Bishop of Western Sydney. As well as undertaking these responsibilities, Gary has already made a significant contribution to the Diocese, especially for his efforts as chair of the COVID-19 Task Force. The Parishes of the Diocese have benefited from his efforts in liaising with NSW Health seeking the best possible ministry outcomes.

Lastly, I acknowledge Bishop Glenn Davies' extraordinary contribution during the additional ten months of his time as Archbishop. We are indebted to Glenn for his sustained efforts in serving the Diocese with distinction during the COVID-19 period. His forthright, clear, careful and energetic leadership has enabled the Diocese to navigate this period well. I express my profound thanks to Glenn and wish Di and Glenn God's blessing in the next chapter of their life together.

Diocese and COVID-19

The book "The Only Plane in the Sky; an Oral History of 9/11" tells the story of individuals affected by the events that occurred nearly 20 years ago. What struck the author was "the sheer randomness of how the day unfolded, who lived, who died, who was touched, who escaped."

Life may appear random. A close examination of any single day would demonstrate the same characteristics.

For the Christian convinced that God's sovereign providential care rules the world, randomness evaporates. Suddenly we are aware that God is at work in innumerable ways at any one time and in any one event. Coincidences and randomness are both the outworking of God's providential purposes and say more about the perspective of us as observers than about the reality of his care.

The consequence of this recognition of God's good hand is to give us the instinct to perceive what God is doing. The complex impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic afford us the chance to try this on a large scale. What is God doing?

God answers prayer

Most importantly, we are reminded that God answers prayer. As a diocese, we have committed during the last 14 months to asking God to show his mercy in halting the pandemic so that lives would not be lost and in enabling a vaccine to be successfully developed. God is answering our prayers.

Now we are hopefully getting to the other side of the Pandemic. What have we learnt?

It is God's world

Our hearts should be filled with thanks that whatever extraordinary human ingenuity there is in developing vaccines and then managing the extraordinary logistical endeavour to distribute them around the world, the overall success in suppressing COVID-19 depends on the common grace that comes from God.

This is indeed God's world, and we do not have a firm grasp on determining how the world should bend towards fitting in with our plans. We can easily have false confidence that our scientific and technological competence means that we can deal with whatever circumstance may arise. While we are thankful that we live in a time of such extraordinary advances, on their own, they are unable to give us the certainty we want about what the future will look like. As always, it is only by apprehending the mercy of God that we are safe.

The gathering of God's people

What has changed for the Church? As we enter the post-covid period, will churches be different?

Streaming church gatherings will likely be an ongoing tool used by most churches. It can be the new front door for non-believers to observe the Church and to hear the gospel. It enables shut-ins to maintain a connection with the Church they belong to in a way not previously possible. The downside of streaming is that it can easily pander to a consumer mentality and lead to casual attitudes towards attendance and commitment. It is likely online meetings will be useful in some areas of church life, such as the occasional small group leaders catch up, the unexpected wardens or parish council meeting, or the provision of an evangelistic course. Most significantly, the limitations of our screens have reminded people of the importance of the gathered community as an expression of belonging. Face to face engagement with one another is still the priority for God's people.

Anglicare

The devastating effect of the COVID-19 pandemic at Newmarch House has given cause for significant reflection, thought and prayer. As good stewards of all that is provided for mission, the reckoning by Anglicare with independent reviews conducted has been rigorous. The determination to prayerfully seek a path of continuous improvement and a values-driven recovery through a volatile and complex landscape is strong. Anglicare's values of integrity, justice, compassion and excellence will continue to be at the core of Anglicare's strategy.

During COVID Anglicare continued to pursue its mission to serve people in need and enrich lives by sharing the love of Jesus across all its operations. Throughout the last year over 4,000 staff and 2,000 volunteers served more than 60,000 people across the Sydney Diocese and beyond in over 130 Anglicare locations.

Be it through the care of older people in residential care homes; supporting independence through home care services; creating vibrant retirement living communities; the provision of safe and affordable housing; assisting

those experiencing social isolation; supporting children and families in dire circumstances, through the mobilisation of disaster recovery teams and by providing Chaplaincy alongside our services and in the wider community; Anglicare's purpose is as strong as ever – being Christ-centred, to better serve those in need and to do more in each community. Synod expresses its thanks to Anglicare and its supporters for the unwavering commitment and adaptability shown in challenging circumstances.

GAFCON Global

During COVID, the Diocese of Sydney has continued in its ongoing support for orthodox Anglicans around the world through GAFCON.

Youthworks has had an increasingly significant role in developing the GAFCON Youth and Children's Network.

Dr Bill Salier, based at Moore College, has been appointed to head up the work of the Theological Education Network. Bill will work closely with Bishop Malcolm Richards in his role as Bishop for International Relations.

In 2020, Anglican Aid launched a Bible College Student Sponsorship program which has been taken up by many of our churches. 500 full-time Bible college students are being sponsored, strengthening ministry in more than 30 GAFCON dioceses around the world

Lastly, our Diocese also maintains close fellowship with Bishop Jay Behan and the Church of Confessing Anglican Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Understanding the Diocese of Sydney

The Diocese can be described in various ways. It can refer to a geographical entity defined by boundaries. It can refer to an association of churches. Other times it something separable from the local church (e.g. "the diocese requires us to authorise lay workers").

The description that best captures the intent of the word Diocese in our context is: "a network of Christian ministries working in a particular geographical area that is parish-based, episcopally led and synodically governed under an Anglican constitution" (2013 Funding Principles and Priorities).

Reflecting on this description theologically helps set out who we are and what we do.

First, the ministries' primary focus across the Diocesan network of churches and organisations is the gospel.

Second, the responsibility that flows from this is to minister the gospel of salvation to all people within the geographic boundaries. This is expressed in the current Diocesan mission "To see Christ honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community."

Third, subdividing the Diocese into parishes aims to ensure that there is a body of believers responsible for ministering the gospel to every person.

Fourth, while the parish is central, not all Christian ministry happens within the parish. Chaplaincy work across Anglicare, Schools and Universities often occurs independent of, though hopefully in fellowship with, parishes.

The Synod papers report that the population growth and demographic changes within the Diocese over the next 40 years will require continual assessment and adjustment in order to best organise and administer our network of churches and organisations. However, it is theological convictions – rather than demographic analyses - that must inform any proposed change.

The ethos of the Diocese of Sydney

What is the ethos of our Diocese? The evangelical character of the Diocese has been shaped in particular by two characteristics that have always been central to the life of the Diocese –

- (i) an intellectually rigorous commitment to the truth of God's Word that is expressed in
- (ii) prayerful missionary/evangelistic endeavour.

Of course, these are not the only things, but you cannot understand the Diocese without understanding how these two characteristics are central.

They are evident from the beginning of parish ministry in 1802, when Anglican evangelicals worked with energy and activism to bring the truth of God's Word to the whole of society. The conviction was that parish ministry was the best way to develop gospel influence. More recently, the emphasis on truth and mission enabled the

Diocese to navigate our path through the secular forces of our increasing sexualised culture by not succumbing to the temptations to withdraw or descend to quick condemnation.

The National Church

A commitment to truth and mission is first expressed in our gospel responsibilities in the Diocese of Sydney, but it cannot simply be confined to diocesan boundaries.

These characteristics of the Diocese have informed our dealings with the National Church. We will stand on our convictions of God's Word revealed and act with determination on our belief because we are convinced that truth matters. Conviction and determination need to be expressed with thoughtfulness. Still, it is often misunderstood either as no more than institutional inflexibility or that somehow Sydney desires to impose itself upon the National Church.

Our engagement with the National Church is because we desire gospel outcomes across the whole of Australia. In its constitution, the National Church has the capacity to bring the blessing of gospel salvation to many in Australia.

Our continued involvement in the National Church is because it is committed to orthodoxy in its founding documents. By its subsequent adoption of a national code of faithfulness in service, it has demonstrated its commitment to orthopraxis. We want this to be maintained for gospel reasons. Despite significant societal changes and the perception that our mission context is challenging, much ministry life remains unchanged. What has changed over the last few decades is that there has been a significant decline in the confidence people have in religious institutions.

While this mirrors a larger decline in many institutions, it is worth reflecting on the explanation of the decline in religious institutions in particular, primarily as we reflect on the Diocese of Sydney and the Anglican Church of Australia.

Our public institutions give expression to how a group of people organise themselves to express a common aim that they desire to achieve. The institution then shapes how individuals understand their relationships with each other with this agreed common aim.

In a fascinating article entitled "The case for Wooden Pews", Yuval Levin looks at the crisis of trust in religious institutions in America and two different ways religious institutions have responded. The first option is to soften the demands of traditional religion where they are at odds with the spirit of the age – softer pews, so to speak. Levin argues this is a mistake because the very thing that has eroded trust in religious institutions is their failure to form and develop people who will live the message they believe with integrity.

This is of interest because it counters the oft-stated suggestion that the religious institution will be strengthened if it adjusts to the broader cultural forces it is facing.

Instead, the religious institution is more robust and healthier when its beliefs are firmly held and, in turn, shape people who live those beliefs with integrity.

Conversely, when the religious institution chooses a path where it is moulded by the society around it, the religious institution chooses a direction that weakens people's confidence and counter-intuitively weakens the institution.

The faith community that is formed by living a shared life with a common conviction, embracing that conviction's demands, will navigate a future more effectively.

What our society needs from the Anglican Church is a way of understanding the challenges of our day while holding to firmly held beliefs lived out in a clear and compelling way.

What does this mean for the Anglican Church in Australia?

The Appellate Tribunal

The Appellate Tribunal is created by the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia. The Constitution gives the Tribunal a function to provide advisory opinions on questions referred to it. In 2019, two related matters were referred to the Tribunal.

The first was in response to legislation passed by the Diocese of Wangaratta to authorise a service to bless marriages that have been conducted in accordance with the Commonwealth Marriage Act. This would imply

that same-sex civil marriages, which cannot be solemnised in Anglican churches, can be blessed by use of the Wangaratta service.

The Diocese of Newcastle considered legislation in similar terms to the Wangaratta Diocese authorising the use of a blessing service. However, the Bishop did not provide his assent to the legislation within the required 30 days and, accordingly, the legislation lapsed. In addition, the Newcastle Synod amended the jurisdiction of its diocesan Tribunal, removing the Tribunal's power to entertain complaints about clergy who had used the blessing service.

The decision of the Appellate Tribunal in both cases turns on the restrictive definition given to the word "doctrine". The Majority Opinion of the Appellate Tribunal held that doctrine is limited to those teachings of the faith which are necessary to salvation. Paragraph 180 of the Appellate Tribunal's Wangaratta opinion is significant:

In our view, the matters in the present reference do not involve issues of faith or doctrine properly so called any more than the dispute over female ordination. The contending views about "blessing" same-sex marriages are strongly held. But, with respect to some of the recent rhetoric, and the actions taken abroad by some bishops of this Church, the blessing of same-sex marriages does not [necessarily] involve denial of God or repudiation of the Creeds or rejection of the authority of Holy Scripture or apostasy on the part of bishops or synods prepared to support such measures.

The conclusion is straightforward and profoundly disturbing.

It remains to be seen whether the next General Synod, which is scheduled for May 2022, is able to find a way forward for us to stay together as a distinctively Anglican Church that will bring the blessing of gospel salvation to many.

Gender Identity

Not unexpectedly, the National Church is now also dealing with matters of Gender Identity. This is the inevitable next stage in the outworking of the sexual revolution. Transgender issues are a consequence of living in a time when the basic binary of male and female are no longer stable categories. It is no longer the case that biological maleness and femaleness, by which society is bound, is seen as a good gift from God.

Why this matters

At first glance, the outworking of the sexual revolution over the last 50 years appear to be no more than a series of attempts to expand what is acceptable sexual behaviour. But as Carl Trueman has explained in "The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self", what is occurring is fundamentally a seismic shift in the understanding of what it means to be human, which prioritises the psychological over the physical in determining identity. Gender identity is now determined by our inward thoughts and authenticity means that one should conform the outward manifestation to our inner self. The changes in cultural assumptions that have taken place have occurred over a long period but the wave of change has come crashing down with a suddenness that has caught us unawares.

Sex is no longer just an activity but something that is now considered central to our identity. The self-determined internal identity controls the external world. What is lost in all of this is the objective capacity to make statements about sex.

The Bible's teaching on sex does speak about behaviour, but it also has a much deeper significance. Theologically, it is first seen in the way that the relationship between Christ and the Church is described. But, secondly, it is also seen in how sexual ethics relates to what it means to be human as God has created us.

The modern notion that sexual orientation is intrinsic to identity and that sexual activity is available to anyone and simply controlled by the giving or withholding of consent overturns biblical anthropology. And as a result, it will not produce a stable society.

Our society is currently engaged in a necessary discussion about consent. As Christians we long for healthy God-honouring relationships between men and women that have no room for harm, whether through coercion, exploitation, sexual aggression or assault. Christians believe that everyone is made in the image of God and therefore are committed to the safety and wellbeing of women. This necessitates a clear understanding of and effectively teaching about sexual consent, including within marriage.

However, sexual expression does not constitute a person. One can be a whole and complete human person without ever expressing themselves sexually. This was true of Adam in the Garden when the fact that he was alone did not signify incompleteness in himself but an inability to complete the mandate given to him – to fill the earth and tend for it. It was especially true of the Lord Jesus Christ. The perfect human life was no less human for his decision to live a single, celibate life. The apostle Paul would speak of his own unmarried state and 'wish that all were as I myself am' (1 Cor. 7:6). This was not to deprecate marriage since he acknowledged 'each has their own gift from God' (v. 7).

More fundamentally, the teaching of Scripture (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) is clear. Unrepentant sexual immorality and explicitly same-sex sexual activity – together, of course, with others, such as idolators, thieves, the greedy, drunkards - will result in exclusion from the kingdom of God. We must be careful not to misinterpret this. All of us are sinners, needing the grace of God. We must all seek God's forgiveness - whatever our sexual orientation, for sexual activity outside of his good plan for humankind. We cannot bless what God explicitly does not bless but instead declares as sin. To teach, model, or approve same-sex marriage through a service of blessing confirms people in a life pattern, relationship and activity, which Scripture does not support.

It is the Scripture that shapes our world view and sexual ethic - irrespective of whether the government allows or endorses same-sex behaviour or marriage. It is not enough to claim that a service of blessing a same-sex marriage is simply blessing what the law of the land has allowed.

Theologically the relationship between Christ and the Church is described in terms of heterosexual marriage. What is the point of the analogy? There is a pattern of mutual service, but with differentiation. The Church remains the Church and differentiated in significant ways from Christ, who loves her sacrificially. Christ remains Christ, differentiated from the Church who lovingly acknowledges his Lordship. The analogy works because, in both pairs, there is irreversible and non-interchangeable differentiation in unity.

The argument is sometimes made that same-sex marriages are essentially arrangements for friendship and close companionship, which may or may not involve sexual activity. However, this is to confuse two very important biblical categories. The Bible teaches much about profound friendships and deep unity between brothers and between sisters. Yet what distinguishes marriage is its openness to sexual intimacy. Marriage ideally incorporates many of the features of friendship, but it transcends them. For two people of the same sex to pursue 'marriage' is, at the very least, to leave open the possibility of sexual intimacy.

The consequence of this biblical understanding is that endorsement of homosexual behaviour by a service of blessing undermines Scripture's authority and the doctrines of creation, and the relationship of Christ and the church.

These are difficult issues to raise, but to agree to same-sex marriage and any service of blessing is such a profound change to the Anglican Church of Australia's doctrine that it would overturn the very foundational documents on which it was built, and it would be rejection of God's authoritative word

GAFCON Australia

The Diocese's involvement in GAFCON Australia is a consequence of the reality that the commitment to truth and mission may require different approaches to future Anglican ministries. Our desire is to support orthodox and faithful churches and to encourage dioceses to maintain fidelity to the word of God and to share God's love in mission together.

If decisions are made that compromise the capacity to speak and defend the truth of the gospel once delivered and to give a clear understanding of the call to repentance in proclaiming the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, then our fellowship will be fundamentally altered.

These decisions are not made lightly, but if true fellowship is an outworking of the gospel, then when the gospel truth is fundamentally negated our decision is sadly forced upon us.

GAFCON Australia remains committed to the task of Anglicans evangelising Australia.

Diocesan Moment

Mission and Evangelism

In an age that focuses on the immediate, the accumulative work of God often goes unnoticed. There are times when God undertakes an unusual work when many are converted in large numbers in a short period. Our instinctive cry will always be, "Lord do it again". This is, of course, God's providential prerogative. Irrespective

of our time, we remain faithful, following in the Scripture, gospel preaching and sacrificial endeavour even when times are difficult.

That is where the overall accumulative gospel work of the Diocese needs to be appreciated. People are being converted in our churches. The move to stream church meetings has enabled people to have a new front door to share the news of Jesus. Numerous zoom meetings with Christianity Explained type groups have now been possible. Last year at the beginning of the Pandemic, there was a youth evangelistic event at Wollongong Entertainment Centre, which had 100 new commitments followed up in local churches. For some, it seems COVID- 19 opened lives to consider the truth of Jesus.

In early 2020 Rev John Lavender commenced as an Assistant Director of Evangelism at Evangelism and New Churches (ENC) to help churches grow their evangelistic culture. In the last 12 months, John has met with over 100 diocesan ministers and visited many churches to assess our current evangelistic efforts.

It is encouraging to report that churches remain committed to evangelism and mission. Common characteristics observed among churches that have maintained an evangelistic culture are: preaching that is gospel centred and so seeks to create gospel conviction; personal and corporate prayer that is evangelistically centred; ownership of a clear vision; a range of evangelistic programs that flow from this; the provision of ongoing training that both equips for and reinforces the evangelistic vision; and small groups that play a vital role because the group leaders are working to make disciples.

Not all churches necessarily have all these characteristics, nor is it the case that evangelistic fruit only depends upon them. Nevertheless, the pattern of these characteristics is typical.

What then are the factors hindering evangelistic growth? As has long been the case, it is the pursuit of comfort, materialism and worldliness. Very easily, the dream and ambitions the world offers deaden the conviction of the gospel. Into this is fed a contentment that the Church is doing well enough in a time of growing hostility to the gospel so that there is little expectation of evangelistic fruitfulness. Overlaid on all of this is the sheer busyness of life, which means sustaining evangelistic relationships is hard.

That is a realistic overall picture of what is hindering evangelistic growth. It is a reminder that all Christian endeavour is spiritual.

ENC is considering what practical steps can be taken to help our churches' evangelistic endeavour. However, since at heart it's spiritual, it remains as always Scripture, prayer and sacrifice as the means of engaging in mission. The hindrances we face are fundamentally spiritual. As has been the case since the gospel was planted here by Richard Johnson, we use spiritual means to form people gripped by the gospel, compelled by the love of Christ and moved to love those around us sacrificially.

We may disagree about some methods, but we are unified in our resolve to persevere, not to be discouraged, and commit again to the prayerful intent to plan, strengthen and sacrifice in the cause of Christ.

Tomorrow the 52nd Synod commences a Special Session for the Archbishop's election. For Synod, this is a significant responsibility, and this has been expressed in prayers over the last month. By the end of the week, God willing, the Diocese will have an Archbishop-elect. Having completed this solemn responsibility, members of Synod will return to the churches and ministries you each represent. The Archbishop will be a name widely known, and his role understood.

However, the Diocese's gospel work progresses in the myriad of normal and largely unnoticed activities that occur day by day and week by week—in the hospital visit to bring God's love in a dark moment; in the invitation to share in another's life when they are at their happiest or at their saddest; in turning up to teach Scripture and speak of the Saviour Jesus because you love to serve the children at your local school. Whatever our circumstances, we are united in our determination not to grow weary in doing good and commit ourselves afresh to joyfully preach the gospel, knowing that Jesus is with us to the very end of the age.

The Rt Rev Peter Hayward
Administrator of Sydney

3 May 2021