

## **Presidential Address**

### **Second Session of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Sydney**

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**14 September 2024**

#### **Sydney's Great Need**

Two years ago we met in the south west growth corridor at Oran Park and I asked you, 'Do you see the crowds?' The crowds of people moving into Sydney – growth areas and established areas, people from many nations, people without knowledge of the Lord and his cross. Do you see the crowds? I believe you do.

Today I want to ask, will you help the crowds see Jesus?

The great need of Sydney is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not mean that Sydney does not have many other pressing and important needs. Our churches and agencies are constantly engaged in responding to the real life impact of the cost of living pressure, the housing crisis, and the wickedness of violence against women. Motions and reports in our business paper range across these issues as well as the scourge of online gambling. Our churches, schools and agencies generously respond to the felt and physical needs of Sydney sides throughout the diocese, and I am very thankful for all the ways in which so many seek to meet the needs of others with practical and financial assistance, the truth and comfort of God's word, in prayer, compassion and personal support.

But Jesus said to the paralysed man who was brought to him by his four excellent friends, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' In doing so, he taught that beyond our visible and felt needs, are our deepest needs – and only Jesus has authority to minister to what is deepest as well as what is on the surface. Our need for reconciliation with God, forgiveness, freedom from the chains of the world, the flesh and the devil, rescue from God's just judgement on sin, and our need for hope in this world and the next.

The task before us, without neglecting what compassion requires, is the task of bringing the life and hope and grace of the gospel of the Lord Jesus to the 6 million or so individuals that inhabit Greater Sydney and the Illawarra. The mission before us is the task of making and maturing disciples of Jesus, in prayerful dependence on the God who sent his Son into the world, for the redemption of the world.

This mission imperative derives first not from human need but from the God's plan. God's purpose to bring unity to all things in heaven and earth under his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:10). People are 'included in Christ' by hearing 'the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation' so that, 'believing in him', they are 'sealed with the promised Holy Spirit' (Ephesians 1:13). From before the creation of the world the purpose of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was to have for himself a people to be his own possession, called through the gospel to be his forever.

Evangelism is essential because Jesus gave to his disciples the task of making disciples of people from every nation, and to teach them to obey everything he commanded, which must include the command to make disciples.

Evangelism is essential because Jesus commanded his disciples to love God with their whole selves and to love their neighbours as themselves. The gospel that Jesus is declared Lord by his death and resurrection calls people into relationship with God the Father in the power of the Spirit. This is the Pearl of Great Price, the gospel of the kingdom; and to make it known to others is the unique way in which God's people may love their neighbours as themselves. Though we may and must serve our neighbours in all kinds of ways, we must not fail to love them in the way that only we can – by sharing with them the gospel of salvation.

Evangelism is essential because Jesus is heralded by the angels to be worthy of all power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory because he was slain and with his blood purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. His mission is summed up in his death and resurrection, and this is the song of heaven, forever. Jesus did not come to earth to offer spiritual advice

or moral teaching. He came to bring about a rescue. A rescue that he achieved on the Cross on which he died, as he bore in his body the penalty our sin deserved and experienced in his death the wrath and hell of God's judgement. A death sufficient for the sins of the world, a cross to summons the nations. The gospel announces that Jesus is Lord, that rescue has come, and repentance and faith is the means by which we take hold of Jesus, Lord and Saviour.

I have expressed our goals as a diocesan fellowship in terms of multiplying disciples of the Lord Jesus, multiplying churches and multiplying leaders in mission.

### **Multiplying Churches**

We're here in the North West Growth Area (NWGA) comprising 120 sq km, 37 km northwest of Sydney CBD. It includes the parishes of Marsden Park, Quakers Hill, Riverstone, Mt Druitt, Stanhope, Kellyville, Rouse Hill, Pitt Town and Windsor. Since 2000 Sydney Anglicans have been planting churches in these suburbs as they have grown in population -- Kellyville in 2001, Stanhope in 2006, Rouse Hill in 2008, and we have greenfield sites in Marsden Park, Riverstone and Box Hill. Other areas in this corridor zoned for residential purposes include North Kellyville, Schofields, Tallawong Station and Vineyard. The population in this area is expected to grow by 10000 people every year from now until 2031. By 2029, the three local councils in the NWGA are required to build 46000 new homes or about 9000 every year till 2029. That's five years away!

Two years ago, this Synod resolved to extend the 2% land acquisition levy, for a decade. That was a bold, generous and mission-minded resolution of this fellowship of Sydney Anglican churches, expressing a determination to work together to bring the gospel of the Lord Jesus to these new communities as they come into being. Dear brothers and sisters, you ought not to think that commitment to the evangelisation of new communities is a common or ordinary thing. I assure you it is not. I praise God for his work among us, to give us a heart for the lost sheep that beats with the heartbeat of God. Every parish across our diocese shares in this work. What a joy that is! What a gift of God! What a privilege! But I believe we can do more and we must do more!

Over the next thirty years, the population of the NWGA is expected to more or less double to 527K people. Sydney Anglican Property has active development consents for new church buildings in Marsden Park and Riverstone. This year, Rouse Hill Anglican Church celebrated twenty years since it was first planted in this school. A team comprised of members of Rouse Hill, along with an equal number from Pitt Town Anglican Church have come together, led by Chris and Helen Mann to plant Cornerstone Anglican Church Box Hill as a joint venture along with the Western Regional Council and Evangelism and New Churches. Sydney Anglican Property acquired a Box Hill site in 2022 and have submitted a Development Application for a temporary shed (that's a technical phrase) for 150 people. Cornerstone Anglican Church, Box Hill had its first public Sunday service in its temporary home at Arndell Anglican College last month!

This is all good news and a wonderful expression of our ability to undertake pioneering mission in the growth areas of Sydney. We do so as a fellowship of local churches united by the gospel in service of the Lord and his mission, and also because of the organisations that we have brought into being to express our collective agreement to work together for the sake of the gospel. Mission-minded schools and organisations - like Rouse Hill and Arndell Anglican Colleges, like Sydney Anglican Property and Evangelism and New Churches - should not be taken for granted. I thank God for them.

At the 2022 Synod in addition to extending the 2% land acquisition levy, the Synod made two other significant decisions with respect to property. The first was to request the Standing Committee to develop a diocesan-wide ministry- directed property strategy so as to encourage fellowship in mission in the whole diocese with respect to property decisions, and the second was to endorse the Standing Committee's policy on holding surplus ministry assets arising from parish amalgamations in trust for the purposes of mission in the whole diocese.

The latter policy contemplates three scenarios for the use of property assets *by a new parish* following a parish amalgamation. The fourth of these scenarios is when it is expected that no ministry will take place at the site of one of the former parishes. The surplus assets are transferred from the new parish to a trust held by what is now Sydney Anglican Property, for the development of new properties for ministry elsewhere than the new parish, with the consent of the Standing Committee.

These three decisions in relation to property – the 2% levy, the diocesan property strategy and the policy on surplus assets - represent the agreement of all of our churches to work collaboratively in the mission task that we share across the 20000 sq. kms that comprise the geographical area of the Diocese of Sydney.

These are decisions that reflect a determination, under God, to embrace the challenge and the opportunity before us.

God has greatly blessed the diocese of Sydney over the 177 years of its existence. But today, 70% of our property assets are east of Parramatta while 45% of Sydney's population currently live west of Parramatta. In just over 20 years, that will be more than 3 million people living west of Parramatta (3.3 million by 2046). The population of Sydney will not only grow in the greenfields areas where vast tracts of undeveloped land is being transformed into new suburbs. Sydney's established areas will grow too. But there can be little doubt that our property resources are concentrated in the established parts of Sydney and there is a real risk that in just a little while we will have lost the opportunity to secure sites for the development of church buildings in greenfields areas, unless we have agreement to prioritise such projects.

Historically, and for theological reasons, we have rightly prioritised the local church in decisions about the use of property assets for ministry in the parish. This is not changing. But we have never considered the priority of the local church in isolation. We are not congregationalists, nor are we a fellowship of independent churches. We are Sydney Anglicans. We are bound together by commitments to the authority of the Scriptures, the centrality of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the urgency and necessity of personal response to the gospel in repentance and faith, and the primary obligation upon the churches to proclaim the gospel so that people may put their trust in Jesus. We recognise the authority and responsibility of the local church for local mission but we gladly welcome the shared responsibility of the fellowship of Sydney Anglican churches for the making and maturing of disciples across the whole of Greater Sydney and the Illawarra.

We are not content merely to belong to a healthy growing church ourselves. We want every Anglican church across the diocese to thrive, to grow, and be a faithful and fruitful instrument in the hand of the Lord. And we have rejoiced to combine resources and determine together, led by the Spirit of God, to establish schools, Anglicare, Moore College, and Youthworks among others. We have a long history of parishes planting new works in partnership; today numerous partnerships between local churches enable ministry in marginalised communities, Indigenous ministry, ministry in culturally defined communities, (as well as ministry in Bathurst and Armidale dioceses) to name a few.

We have done this because of the conviction that we ought to count ourselves as those who have received much and from whom much will be expected. That we have been given 'five talents' and will not prove faithful stewards attending to our Master's business if we only return what he has entrusted to us. Or only harness these resources for ourselves while leaving countless souls in growing parts of Sydney without a witness to the gospel of the Lord Jesus and facing a desperate eternity without him. We are not trying merely to build buildings, we want to plant churches. We want to see people saved by every possible means.

The draft property strategy invites local churches to consider whether property assets under their control could prayerfully, voluntarily and cheerfully be reused or redeployed for maximum ministry benefit and blessing. Contributing a property to the Ministry Infrastructure Development Fund would provide Sydney Anglican Property with a capital gift to:

- enable the purchase of critical land in greenfields areas, or
- accelerate the construction of new buildings for new churches, or
- facilitate the urban renewal program to serve churches in established areas.

In other words, a local church that isn't party to a parish amalgamation could of its own accord assess its property holdings and its ministry needs and future plans, and decide that it has surplus assets it could donate in part or whole to the broader diocesan strategy for church planting in greenfields or urban revitalisation. A parish amalgamation is not the only context in which consideration of the best use of property assets that are surplus to local ministry needs might be contemplated. We mustn't set our substantial heritage of property assets against our godly heritage of the gospel and faithful, creative mission enterprise. Rather, the former must serve the latter.

In recent years a few parishes have committed substantial resources from the sale of underutilised or surplus assets to fund church planting in the greenfields, usually alongside their own revitalisation strategy. How grateful I am for such sacrificial, imaginative and generous mission-mindedness. I hope such examples are an encouragement to you and a stimulus to your prayers as you consider how to support new churches for new communities. Will you help the crowds see Jesus?

At the beginning of this year, with the endorsement of last year's Synod<sup>1</sup>, the Anglican Church Property Trust, the Anglican Church Growth Corporation, New Churches for New Communities and the St Andrew's House Corporation merged and became Sydney Anglican Property. This was the most significant restructure of Sydney Anglican property organisations for fifty years. I am extremely grateful to God for the men and women who served in governance and in management of these organisations, and I praise God for the gospel-minded mission clarity that drove their commitment to implementing this change. Later in this Synod you will be asked to ratify this process, and I urge you to do so. It has already achieved an alignment in purpose and method that is greatly enhancing our capacity to respond to the challenges and opportunities before us. The goodwill and harmony in the transition and the new operational processes and paradigms is a truly wonderful testimony to the calibre of all those involved and their Christian humility, grace and commitment to the mission in which we all share.

At the heart of our desire to increase the effectiveness and responsiveness of our property organizations to the needs of parishes and the opportunities for growing mission into the future is our deep commitment to the place of the local church – the people of God gathered – for the evangelistic task before us. We want to establish local communities of God's people in new growth areas, and we want to revitalise and renew existing congregations of God's people in established parts of Sydney because we are convinced that the local congregation and every member has a key role to play in bringing the gospel of the Lord Jesus to every community in Sydney.

### **Multiplying Disciples**

The mission that Jesus has left to his disciples is to make and mature disciple-making disciples. This begins with the proclamation of the gospel so that people may repent for the forgiveness of their sins and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit - who assures us of our adoption as sons and daughters, enables us to hear, receive, trust and obey the Word of God, and transforms us into the likeness of Christ by the renewing of our minds. In this way we are equipped for the works that the Lord who saved us by his grace, appointed in advance for us to do, by grace.

We must not accept the perspective of our unbelieving culture that faith is merely inward, personal, subjective and private. We must not think that we have been saved by the Lord for an entirely future experience of his sufficiency and beauty and power. And in the meantime, make our way through life as best we can, holding down a job, caring for our families, and looking to the Lord to smooth the way. No – that would be far too meagre a discipleship so as to hardly be worthy of the name.

The apostle Peter says '...you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.' There is an apostolic vision of discipleship! A chosen people, a royal priesthood, God's treasured possession.

Declaring the praises of God is to be our preoccupation – not a burden but a privilege, not a duty but a delight. We make this declaration *to God* when we meet together – rejoicing in all that he is and all that he has done and offering our glad and grateful praise. As CS Lewis famously said, the praise of the one you love is the consummation of that love and completes our joy in God. We make this declaration *to each other* when we meet together or when we share in conversation – for the mutual encouragement of one another, and to spur one another on in love and good deeds. And we declare the praises of God *to the world*, to those around us. We declare the praises of Jesus – the power of his forgiveness, the tenderness of his love, the trustworthiness of his word, the generosity of his welcome, the righteousness of his judgments, the imminence of his return.

It is my prayer that every Sydney Anglican is able to explain to another person how it is that they came to confess Jesus as Lord and trust in him as Saviour. Members of Synod, I take it that you are able to bear witness to the power of Jesus' transforming grace in your life. I take it that the character of your life is such that the resurrection of Jesus is the only explanation for it. Why would you devote six half days to the business of our fellowship if this were not so? Why would you devote your hard-earned money, and your discretionary time, and your gifts, skills and expertise to the work of making Christ known, encouraging his people, serving others in his name if it were not so? How I praise God for the faithful witness of ordinary Sydney Anglicans to the Lordship of Christ in their lives. It is rare, thrilling and beautiful.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Synod' should be 'Standing Committee'

I hope you can, as the apostle Peter says, give an answer for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and respect. We know that average Australians are far more likely to investigate Christian faith as a result of their relationships with ordinary people who live out their faith in a genuine way, than they are interested in the words of religious officials like me or the throwaway references to the spiritual by prominent people and so-called celebrities (McCrindle, 2017). Our culture prizes authenticity, as it should, and it is open to respecting and even admiring authentic faith lived out.

May I ask you for whose salvation you are praying? Who is that you long for to come to know Jesus? I have thought recently that my own efforts at praying for the salvation of those far away from the Lord have been far too weak. So here is what I have decided to do, with the help of God, and I invite you to join me.

Five days of prayer for those who don't know Christ. Day 1 - pray for a member of your family who doesn't follow the Lord. Day 2 - pray for a friend who doesn't know the Lord; a work colleague, a sporting buddy, someone from your book club, the parent of your child's school friend. Day 3 - pray for your circle of acquaintances; a neighbour, your doctor, or people you see frequently but only fleetingly like your barrista, or the person from whom you buy your bread and milk. Day 4 - pray for people you used to know but no longer see regularly. God can work in their lives through others, in response to your prayers. Day 5 - pray for those you know who have drifted from Christian fellowship or from faith in Christ, that the Lord would speak to them as he did to the younger son, and bring them to their senses. Can we pray each week for five people to come to know the Lord or know him better?

I have asked all the Mission Area leaders to focus on prayer in their gatherings of rectors and other church workers in a mission area. I have invited all of the rectors to meet with me by zoom to pray together, four times a year. It is my practice to pray for the senior ministers of our churches, for their ministry and that of the teams, and for their families – a dozen rectors every fortnight. As I do so I have been encouraged every time to hear of people becoming Christian and getting baptised, of others signing up for Christianity Explored or Alpha or Life. I hope that next year we will hold a diocesan day of prayer for mission. (Put the 4<sup>th</sup> of May in your diary and watch this space!)

Prayer is the work of God and not just a prelude to it. We are to be people of prayer, as well as proclamation. I find it hard to pray but when we pray together we grow in the fellowship that is able to make plans for proclamation in concert with one another.

I am saying that we must reclaim a sense of personal responsibility for sharing God's word with others – and as churches, seek to support one another in doing so. This is in part because our non-Christian friends and family are more open to hearing from us in the course of an existing friendship than they are to come to church or an event or even a course. I don't mean that we should give up on those opportunities for sharing the gospel – far from it. I mean that people are more likely to accept an invitation to church or a course if they have already begun to have a conversation with you about the Lord – in your home or after work or in some other relational setting that you share with them.

In John chapter 20, sometimes called John's Great Commission, the risen Lord Jesus says to his disciples, 'As the Father sent me, I am sending you.' We are sent ones, sent on the mission of our Lord and our Father, in the power of his Spirit. As we send our mission partners in the fellowship of CMS, we must begin to see ourselves, at home, and yet sent by the Lord who was sent for us, on mission. He sends us into our communities, he sends us into our workplaces and places of study, he sends us into neighbourhoods, villages, offices and schools. He sends us to cinemas and shopping malls, and concert halls, and footy fields, and swimming pools and cycle ways. Not to preach on soap boxes, but to be so involved in the life of our communities that we may share with them what we know of the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The mission of Jesus will not progress merely by people being invited to church, or to listen to a religious official. Jesus sends his disciples on mission into the world.

The God who calls us into relationship with himself through the gospel adopts us into his family by grace. This family has its expression in every local church, and the mission in which we all share individually, is a mission that also belongs to every local church.

Last year's Synod requested the Standing Committee to report on average attendance and the impact of social change on church attendance. The Attendance Patterns and Mission in the Diocese report presented to this Synod fulfils that request, and I am grateful to the members of the committee for their work in bringing it to us. The Synod will have the opportunity to discuss the report and to recommend responses to it. I make the following brief observations.

The finding that two thirds of church centres in the diocese experienced decline over the decade from 2013-2023, and that the average adult attendance declined by nearly 7% (or just over 14% adjusted for population growth) is rightly a matter calling for deep reflection, prayerful lament, frank self-examination including where necessary, repentance; as well as positive, deliberate and hopeful response and action in dependence on God. Complacency is not an option, but neither should we give in to despair or self-pity.

The numbers are not self-interpreting. The report engages with the numbers in careful ways. Some of the results are counter-intuitive. Some of the large churches had the most decline. Some of the growing churches had few newcomers but many transfers. Some of the smaller churches had more newcomers. The size of a church doesn't necessarily tell you about its health.

That is why I hope every senior minister, parish council and ministry team will give it consideration in the months ahead seeking in an open way to learn from its findings. Responding to these findings will require the engagement of the whole church, and not only the ministry team. In particular, I hope Mission Areas will also give it sustained reflection, prayer and discussion. That there are differences between regions, but also within Mission Areas, means that there is scope to learn from each other locally, if we are willing to be humble and charitable with one another. I have every confidence that this will be so.

The report is full of numbers, statistic and graphs. But every number represents a person. Let's say you attended a church of 150 people in 2013. If it declined by 20% over the decade (as was the case for 126 churches) it is now a church of 120 people, 30 people fewer than 10 years ago. That means it has shrunk by three people a year. But very few churches are completely static in their congregation members over a decade. So perhaps in a church of 150 that declined to 120 over ten years there could be a number of senior saints who went home to the Lord, or a couple of families that transferred to another church or moved interstate; or a bunch of Uni students who moved out of home. Perhaps six members left in one year and three newcomers were saved.

My point is, in many churches, these numbers reflect a relatively small number of people. And every person in church matters. Every member matters, every visitor matters. Every encounter with another person matters. Perhaps paradoxically, attention to systems and structures and even statistics – all right and proper things - might inadvertently result in a failure to attend to the thing that is closest to the heart of the Lord. People.

I am not speaking only of interactions between newcomers and the minister, but their interaction with the welcomer at the door, the person who serves them morning tea and the person who sits next to them in the church and offers a welcome – or not. The ministry of inviting, welcoming, evangelising, establishing and equipping a new Christian is the hard, slow, patient and prayerful work of disciple making that is the heart of our mission. The joyful work of people coming to know Christ one soul at a time, by the grace of God.

The report makes reference to the impact of secularisation expressed in the numbers of people who recorded no religion in the 2021 national census. The two regions that had the greatest decline in church attendance also had the greatest increase in the number of people who identified as having no religion. To some extent it is likely that this reflects that there were higher numbers of nominal Christians in those regions, some of whom may have been church attenders, who no longer identify with Christianity.

But it is not the case that all those who identify as having no religion are uninterested in matters of faith. McCrindle reported in 2017 that 61% of Australians are attracted to the person of Jesus, though 1 in 29 have never heard of him! According to a 2021 study by McCrindle, two thirds of Australians are likely to attend a church service online (64%) or in person (67%) if invited by a friend or family member. Three in ten are extremely likely to attend and Gen Z are twice as likely to accept an invitation as the baby boomers. Encouragingly, Australians who know at least one Christian are likely to use the words 'caring', 'loving' and 'kind' to describe them.

This represents a marvellous opportunity – people are more open than we might think - though we ought not to be surprised. The secular confidence that science and autonomy are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a happy and virtuous life is contradicted by the tidal waves of anxiety, loneliness and addiction that is the common experience of far too many of our fellow citizens, friends and neighbours. And yet the NCLS found between 2016 and 2021 that the number of Sydney Anglicans who invite others to church fell from 39% to 32%, even though 75% report feeling comfortable to share their faith. Did we get out of the habit during COVID-19, or was it something else? People who do invite others to church usually enjoy their church and would love others to experience it.

One of the troubling findings of the 2021 NCLS was the continuing decline in the number of new people in church which has fallen from 12% in 2001 to 5.4% in 2021. Newcomers includes new believers, and not-yet believers who may be exploring Christian faith, so people being saved is closely aligned with the number of newcomers. These are matters for prayerful reflection and self-assessment as well as united and courageous change. Are we really welcoming? Do people feel judged or cared for when they come to church? Is it OK to have questions, have a messy life? If someone came to church and listened in on the after church conversation would they be attracted, curious or repelled?

We must not run silent on the great themes of the bible including those that will likely be unpalatable to newcomers, but neither should we be indifferent to the kind of community that we are and the way we interact with those who are among us, but not yet Christian. The missionary bishop Lesslie Newbigin said, if secular people are to believe that the greatest power in the world and the power that controls the future is a man nailed to a cross, they will need a living and transformed community of people who live in light of that truth to make it plausible to them. Of course, it is God alone who is able to lift the veil from the hearts of those who are blinded by the god of this age, and he must do it. But a community characterised by mutual ministry in love, forgiveness, hospitality, care and holiness; a community of praise, thanksgiving and hope, speaks of the truth, beauty and power of the God who says, 'Let there be light!' By God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, such is the character of the local church; and praise God, such is the character of many, many Sydney Anglican churches. We are to speak the truth in love, with all the diligence, care and wisdom that implies.

According to the NCLS Sydney Anglicans highly value the preaching and teaching ministry of their churches, as well as belonging to a small group. We value reaching the lost less highly.

Have we lost hope that God is able to save even the most unlikely person? Have we become angry or frightened by social change around us? Are we so burdened by life's difficulties or so distracted by life's pleasures, we have lost sight of the kingdom? Have we become resentful of a culture that no longer gives us much thought or status? They gave no status to Jesus either when God in the flesh came among us. Yet Jesus 'looked on the crowds and had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.' Will you pray with me for a heart more burdened for the lost? And will you help the crowds see Jesus?

### **Multiplying Leaders**

Synod has before it a request to approve in principle the establishment of a new diocesan evangelism engine to be known as Evangelism and Ministry Partnerships.

The proposal is to restructure Evangelism and New Churches (ENC), Ministry Training and Development (MT&D) and Anglican Media as well as some other entities, so as to align the activities of all of them around the same mission goals and priorities. The restructured Evangelism and Ministry Partnerships will likely involve the creation of four specific areas of ministry focus, each intended to have their own director. Evangelism in the local church is one of the four key ministry areas reflecting our commitment to collectively resourcing and strengthening the evangelistic efforts of all Sydney Anglicans and our local churches. I have already spoken at length about the urgency and priority of evangelism.

Local mission will be the second area of ministry focus. Here what we have in mind, is ENC's work in church planting and evangelism in specific localities (like the greenfields) and among specific groups whether culturally, ethnically or demographically defined. ENC currently works to identify suitable people to lead church planting ministry in greenfields and other areas. By including the 'personnel' functions of MT&D in a new 'People and Training' ministry focus area we hope to enhance our work of raising up, recruitment, selection and training of people for church planting work, as well as for leadership in other areas of ministry including specialist evangelists, and church leaders. We want to put the 'people' functions of the diocese in the same room with the evangelism and church planting functions so that they work together, inform each other's thinking and practice and present to those whom God is raising up from among us a clear pathway into ministry in this Sydney Anglican fellowship; one that accompanies and supports them on the whole journey.

In addition to its oversight of church planting in greenfields and established areas, ENC has also overseen the development of church planting work in marginalised communities. The development of The Well training program – a collaboration between the Ministry in Marginalised Areas Committee, Moore College, several parishes and some key seed partners - is an expression of our desire to ensure that we are involved in gospel work in all kinds of communities in every part of the diocese.

It is a great joy to me that within our diocesan fellowship are dear brothers and sisters who are labouring to bring the gospel to the tens of thousands of people from other places and other backgrounds, who are now part of our community and know little or nothing of the Lord and his gospel. The Satya group, named after the Hindi word for Truth, are equipping us for ministry to those of South Asian background. More than 200 people from across the diocese attended their conference just last weekend. MTM works closely with churches in areas where there are large populations of people of Muslim faith. Thousands of those who are migrating to Australia have some association with the Roman Catholic faith but often know little of the Scriptures, the gospel and the reformation doctrines of grace; others comes from Buddhist background and know little of a creator God who loves all that he has made and has set a day when the world will be judged by the man he has appointed by raising him from the dead.

Thirty five of our congregations are Chinese speaking, other services in languages other than English include Indonesian, Japanese, Dinka, Vietnamese, Urdu, Farsi and Arabic. Last month's Southern Cross reported on the establishment of a new Korean language service in Lidcombe through a partnership between Enfield/Strathfield and Lidcombe parishes, and conversations are taking place between other churches considering a partnership in foreign language ministry to cater to large ethnic populations distributed around Sydney.

Students at The Well, undertake the Moore College Diploma of Biblical Theology in a specially delivered mode to accommodate those who have full time or part time jobs in the workforce, while also serving in their churches. They come from thirteen ethnic backgrounds including Indian, Nepalese and Pakistani; Nigerian, Congolese and Liberian; Fijian, Samoan and Maori, and Indigenous and Anglo Australian. We have identified the raising up of leaders for all kinds of new and existing ministry as one of our key priorities. I am deeply thankful for those who are serving at The Well, those who are studying there, those churches partnering in coaching and mentoring, and individuals supporting the work financially and praying for it. The budget that comes before the Synod has a significant amount allocated to this work. These are matters over which we ought to give humble and hearty thanks.

What's more, such ministry cannot be thought of merely as a kind of added extra or optional enterprise.

In a post-modern multicultural society, truth is regarded as relative. Churches and other faith groups are expected to promote tolerance and harmonious co-existence. Indeed, we are glad to do so. But we cannot accept that truth is relative, or that contradictory claims about Jesus, heaven and hell, salvation and judgement can simply all be right at the same time. On the contrary, cross-cultural evangelism is demanded by the gospel and we cannot neglect what the Lord is doing in bringing people of many faiths to this country. With gentleness and respect, as the apostle Peter says, we must speak of him who died for the nations and lives again as Lord and Judge of the nations. To this end, it is vital that we not only have congregations comprised of people who speak the same non-English language (especially if they are newly arrived or left their home country as a result of some trauma from which they need to recover), but it is vital that we have many multicultural congregations.

If we say, as we must, that Jesus is saviour of all, and that only Jesus saves, then churches must reflect that comprehensiveness of culture - along with age, gender, economic and educational background. We will not be persuasive in asserting that Jesus is the Lord of *all* and the Saviour of *all*, if the church appears to be comprised only of *some*.

As I travel around the diocese it is truly humbling and deeply encouraging to see churches that reflect the cultural diversity of their neighbourhoods. Where people from many nations who live as neighbours in the suburban streets, are also gathered together by the gospel of Jesus and stand alongside one another in our churches singing the praises of the Lamb who was slain and by his blood purchased people for God from every tribe and language.

The restructured Evangelism and Ministry Partnerships will also likely include a Communications and Public Engagement arm. The significant additional investment in Anglican Media proposed in our budget is a recognition that they have had no increase in funding in real terms for more than a decade, but also that there are literally hundreds of thousands of Sydneysiders who have no contact whatsoever with the gospel, and yet in our digital age, social media is perpetually churning out messaging.

Instagram has 2 billion monthly active users, YouTube hosts 720000 hours of videos daily and Google processes more than a quarter of a million searches every second – that's 22 billion a day. Taking the gospel to Sydney, and especially to people under 40 years of age requires that we become more present in media, more strategic, more creative and more responsive. We want to tell the stories that celebrate the fruit of Sydney Anglican ministries so that we can all give thanks to God and be encouraged to persevere

in the tasks that he has given to us. We want to facilitate the kind of collaboration and coordination that comes from being well-informed through regular, clear, focussed communication. We want to grow our evangelistic reach and apologetic engagement. We want to tell the greatest story of all, to as many people as possible. The numbers tell us there is openness to the gospel, there is willingness to engage, there are people who have questions – we want to grow our media arm so as to be where they are, and to engage them in a way that is meaningful and accessible.

The motion before you asks the Standing Committee to continue to consult with the Boards of ENC, MT&D and the Anglican Media Council about the optimal structure and timing for the new entity. I hope you will give it your warm endorsement and undertake to pray for this process which holds the prospect of strengthening the crucially important ministry exercised by each of these organisations in ways which will be 'greater than the sum of the parts.'

### ***Youthworks and Moore College***

A key aspect of our commitment to multiplying leaders is our investment in the training of young people, not only to serve as youth leaders, but to serve for the whole of their lives. I am immensely encouraged that 80% of churches are actively engaged with Youthworks' Ministry Support Team, and 150 local church children and youth ministers meet with Youthworks coaches. In the past year, regional one day training events equipped more than 3000 children and youth leaders throughout the diocese, along with nearly 1800 SRE teachers. Nearly 800 senior high Christian young people attend the annual Leaders in Training camps. They are equipped to serve in the youth and children's ministries of their churches but are also trained in a biblical and theological world view that will, God willing, shape their discipleship for the rest of their lives. The proposed budget includes a 15% increase in funding for Youthworks.

If we were to succeed in establishing one new church for every 30000 people in the greenfields areas alone, we would need far more men and women training for ministry than are currently in our system. Can I ask every parish to be intentionally prayerful about sending or supporting at least one suitable person to train for full time ministry at Moore College or Youthworks College in the next three years? Some churches will send more - praise God – but can we not pray that God would raise up at least one person from every parish? We want our graduates to go everywhere across the diocese (and beyond). And we want them to come from everywhere across the diocese as well!

The evangelisation of Sydney requires men and women who will put the honour of the Lord and the salvation of souls ahead of any personal ambition for success, comfort, wealth or reputation. Do we have such people among us? Indeed we do! If you have not read a Moore College publication or visited the College recently I encourage you to do so. It will greatly encourage and enlarge your heart for God's work in our diocese and beyond. Our College students are joyful, prayerful, Christ-exalting and servanthearted. Thank God for them. And pray the Lord to raise up workers for the harvest, and let us be ready and glad to offer them our support in prayer, fellowship and finance.

### ***Indigenous Leadership***

We have gathered today on the traditional lands of the Darug people. I gladly acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present and I thank them for their continuing custodianship of the lands which we now share.

The Synod is being asked to agree to the creation of a new position to be known as the Director of Indigenous Ministry to be funded in part by the addition of a 0.5% increase to the current 1.0% of Synod budget allocated annually to the Indigenous People's Ministry Trust.

In 1973 Archbishop Sir Marcus Loane observed in his Presidential Address:

What were the long-term consequences of this encounter between the white settler and the Aborigine? In the case of the white settler it meant that a vast share of the world's last vacant lands fell into his hands. The gain was immense and as their descendants, we enjoy these advantages to the full today. It was otherwise for the Aborigine. (*sic*)

In response Sir Marcus opined that Sydney Anglicans should take three actions: supporting, though not uncritically, State and Federal government initiatives to improve the welfare of Aboriginal people; supporting church and community organisations seeking to do the same; and, he said, "we must do what only we as Christians will do, in seeking to share our faith...we must seek to introduce them to the grace of God... And we must try to encourage those who are Christians, to build them up in faith, and to welcome them into true

Christian fellowship.” Accordingly, Sir Marcus drew attention to the appointment of Pastor Ben Bird to work among his own people in Redfern.

In 1983 Archbishop Donald Robinson said in his Presidential Address that it was time to consolidate the life and ministry of the Aboriginal congregation in Redfern. Sadly, that intention was not able to be sustained and we do not currently have an Indigenous-led ministry in Redfern. Thankfully, we do have Living Waters Church which includes Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members, including in the ministry team.

In 1995 Archbishop Harry Goodhew addressed the Synod in these terms:

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander people must be enabled to bring their history and commitment to Christ to enlarge the vision and life of our church. We must act in a way that makes this possible....We must continue to seek the advice of their leadership as to the best ways for us to facilitate their own Indigenous Christian ministry and outreach.

In 1998 with the encouragement of Archbishop Goodhew, the Synod agreed to establish an endowment of \$1.2M for the support, training and development of Indigenous ministers and churches, to be administered by the Indigenous People’s Ministry Committee whose first chair was Pastor Ray Minniecon.

Last year, Synod resolved to request each parish to take steps to identify and recognize the Indigenous history of their local area, including any current identifiable indigenous community or ministry in their area. In that spirit, I have established a small group to work towards a process for hearing the stories of God’s work among and through Indigenous people in the life of our diocese, and I hope to be able to report to you further about that at next year’s Synod.

In 2003 Synod agreed to contribute 1% of its annual budget to the Indigenous People’s Ministry Trust, and in 2006 Synod directed that the management fee for the Trust be waived.

I’ve rehearsed some of this history because I think it shows that though we have often expressed good will and gospel intent, progress has been slow and in particular, our Indigenous brothers and sisters have been largely absent from discussion and decision making about their own ministry. The inclusion of two Indigenous members of Synod by ordinance in 2006 was a small step towards including Aboriginal people in the Synodical processes that made decisions about ministry to indigenous people.

The position of Director of Indigenous Ministry is intended to provide leadership across the diocese in two specific ways. The first is in Ministry Development. This is crucial for sustained, coordinated planning for raising up and supporting Indigenous ministers. I am delighted that currently there are two indigenous men undertaking formal theological and ministry training in the Diocese. But our most experienced Indigenous ministry leadership is approaching retirement and we already have more needs in this area than we are meeting. The challenges in recruiting young Indigenous ministers are even more confronting than recruiting non-Indigenous ministry trainees, and the appointment of a Director of Indigenous Ministry will facilitate recruitment, support and mentoring.

The second area of leadership to be provided in this way is in education and representation. It is fair to say that non-Aboriginal Australia has little understanding of Aboriginal culture and is ill-equipped to make judgments about how the gospel variously critiques, confronts, confirms, or transforms Indigenous culture. The appointment of a person to this position allows us to become learners and listeners as well as partners in gospel ministry with Indigenous brothers and sisters. I’m grateful for the work of the committee led by Nigel Fortescue and I commend the motion to your prayerful consideration.

### **Governance**

I am immensely grateful to the more than 400 men and women who generously serve as governors on the boards of our schools and diocesan organisations. The vast majority are dedicated members of our churches and many are members of this Synod. The revised diocesan governance policy comes to the Synod after an extensive and intensive period of consultation and review, and seeks to embed governance practice that is effective, accountable and sustainable. This is important not only because of the widely reported governance failures of private, community and government sector organisations, including us, as documented by multiple royal commissions but because God is a God of order who will hold the world accountable for every thought, word and deed, whether open or hidden.

## **Presidential Address – 14 September 20234(Second Ordinary Session of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Synod)**

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As a diocese we have, over many years, attended to the Christian faith and character of our governors and the new policy introduces an explicit personal commitment to our organisations' Christian purpose. We will devote significant time to this matter.

Additionally, the Synod will receive the report on the use of non-disclosure and non-disparagement agreements. In the early months of my tenure as your Archbishop I received multiple communications about the use of NDAs in the diocese. I was therefore very grateful when Standing Committee agreed to appoint a committee to undertake a study of this matter. In both cases we have been exceptionally well served by those who produced this material and I commend the policy and the report to your careful and prayerful consideration.

### **Conclusion**

As I visit churches around the diocese I am often asked what the best part of my job is. I always reply, Sunday. It's a joy to see God's people gathered together Sunday by Sunday; hearing God's word, encouraging each other in the knowledge and service of the Lord, praying for the world around us, and seeking to serve their community, especially by making Christ known.

Almost every Sunday the rector will say to me something like, 'this young girl brought her friend to youth group and now her Mum is coming to church and keen to read the bible'; 'that man started coming six months ago and is getting baptised next month'; 'seven people have signed up for our next Life course'. One man said to me, 'I started coming with my wife, they taught the bible and the way the men cared for me, I knew it was true.'

It is the Lord's mission and he will do it. We serve a gracious and faithful Master who gave himself for the life of the world. He has promised to build his church and to be with us in the mission, to the end of the age. Members of Synod, you see the crowds. What will we do so that by every means in our power, and by the sovereign and gracious hand of God, we may help the crowds see Jesus?