

9/94 Future Patterns of Ministry

(A report from a Synod Committee.)

Our Archbishop said in his presidential address to Synod in 1993 -

“As the bishop of the diocese, one of my most important tasks is the recruitment, selection, training, supporting, resourcing and oversight of those who are licensed to lead and to minister in churches of the Diocese. These issues will be a major focus of my attention in the coming years. The maxim that under God everything depends on those sent out to advance gospel ministry is validated repeatedly in experience. I purpose under God to give the churches the best leadership possible.”

1. Synod Resolution

In keeping with the Archbishop's statement and the perceived need on the part of Synod for an overall review of ministry in the Diocese, the following resolution was passed at the session of Synod in October 1994 -

“This Synod asks the Archbishop respectfully to establish a committee to report to the next session of Synod on -

- (a) future patterns of ministry (lay, elders, deacons, priests and bishops) especially in relation to -
 - (i) tenure,
 - (ii) indelibility of orders,
 - (iii) licences,
 - (iv) the limitations on and flexibilities available to persons exercising ministry; and
- (b) a coherent policy and programme for future patterns and development of ministry (lay and clerical) in this Diocese with particular comment on-
 - (i) selection and qualification,
 - (ii) recruitment and training,
 - (iii) terms of office and tenure,
 - (iv) limitations and restrictions on ministry,
 - (v) licences,
 - (vi) terminology of offices and practices.

Such report should if possible indicate what legislation would be needed to implement any changes recommended.”

In addition, two other matters were referred to the Committee -

- (a) Study leave for clergy.
- (b) How effective team ministry might work with Diocesan structures giving particular regard to Synod representation.

2. Committee Membership

The following persons were appointed by the Archbishop to constitute the Committee -

Archdeacon T.W. Edwards	Archdeacon P.F. Perini
Canon R.C. Forsyth	Mr G. Pritchard
The Rev N. Jarrett	Bishop R.G. Smith
The Rev P.D. Jensen	Bishop P.R. Watson
The Rev M.B. Robinson	Mr Justice P.W. Young

The Committee held 16 meetings including two whole day conferences.

3. The Task

In view of the challenges the Diocese is facing in relation to the ministry of the Gospel, it was considered that it was essential to address basic questions like: What is ordination? For what purpose? With what rights, responsibilities, duties and obligations? With what consequences?

4. Basic Study Outline

After initial presentations and preliminary discussions, the Committee decided upon the following outline as a basis for its research and the formulation of its recommendations:

4.1 *The People of God*

- Who are the people of God?
- What should the people of God be doing?
- Biblical ministry.
- An examination of the Anglican basis of ministry - the Ordinal and BCP.

4.2 *Present Ministry Patterns*

- Historical development.
- Sociology.
- Ordinances.

4.3 *What Do We Want? What Changes are Needed?*

5. Presentations by Members

5.1 "A Major Biblical Theological Study of the Plan and Purpose of God in Relation to Ministry" (Phillip Jensen) - 21 February 1995, 14 March 1995 (revised), 4 April 1995 (revised).

5.2 A Brief Summary and Comment on "Looking into the Parish" (Robert Forsyth) - 18 July 1994.

5.3 "The Nature and Scope of Ministry" (Peter Young) - 16 August 1994.

5.4 "What's Wrong with Ordained Ministry" (Narelle Jarrett) - August 1994.

5.5 "Present Ministry Patterns: A Sociological Perspective" (Martin Robinson) - 8 September 1994.

5.6 "Preliminary Ideas" (Ray Smith) - 30 September 1994.

5.7 "Some Recommendations" (Ray Smith) - 21 February 1995.

5.8 "A Background Paper" (Ray Smith) - 8 November 1995.

6. Review (8 November 1995)

After eighteen months, the Committee reviewed its progress and reached the following conclusions.

6.1 A majority believed it was not its task to reinvent the system, or to attempt to change what is entrenched in our Constitution.

6.2 To develop a coherent policy and programme for future patterns and development of ministry, both lay and clerical, is a huge undertaking. It may be impossible to do due to the diverse views in the Diocese on ministry and because of Constitutional difficulties. The Committee was also finding it difficult to agree on fundamental ecclesiological issues.

6.3 That issues being dealt with by other committees should be eliminated from the agenda. The issues identified were:

- (a) Indelibility of Orders which was addressed in the "Relinquishment of Holy Orders Bill 1994" (The Standing Committee's Supplementary Report to Synod 1993, p 28).
- (b) The question of Ordination which was the subject of a report to Synod from the Legal Committee and the Diocesan Doctrine Commission (the 1991 Year Book - "Nature and Functions of the Three-Fold Orders of Ministry," p 348).
- (c) The Archbishop's Archdeacon for Ordination and Ministry Development is co-ordinating a review of ordained ministry selection, qualification, recruitment and training processes with various groups including Moore College and the CEFM.

6.4 That a **small** number of key recommendations be presented to Synod. The intention being that if a sound recommendation was implemented, the effect upon the patterns and policies for ministry would be far reaching. The Committee identified five issues for further work:

- (a) Parish boundaries.
- (b) Clergy accountability.
- (c) Licenses
- (d) Team ministry.
- (e) Lay partnership in ministry.

The Committee decided to make recommendations which would be presented to Synod in this report.

7. Recommendations

7.1 *Parish Boundaries*

The Committee recognised that in certain places the overcoming of the restrictions on establishment of mission centres and special congregations across parish boundaries may be a significant factor in reaching unreached people with the Gospel.

The existence of geographical boundaries may be one factor which makes it easier for other denominations to plant a church than for fellow Anglicans to target a special people group not being reached by the parish concerned.

In some parts of the Diocese a geographical parish system works well (eg Southern Highlands, South Coast, Blue Mountains and certain discrete areas in Sydney suburbia). On the other hand, there are concentrated urban areas where our denomination does not seem to be gathering significant numbers of lost people into our churches. Parish boundaries may be one factor which inhibits experimenting and new initiatives. In such areas, apart from the removal of the boundaries, several other strategies could be tried. Boundaries might be redrawn to make mission areas larger by amalgamating several parochial units. Each church in an area deanery might have the same boundary so that a clergy person would be licensed to a particular church in a geographically determined deanery. Alternatively the geographical area of responsibility might become the local government area. In such a larger area there may well be churches which function as 'parish' churches, but others will be multi-staffed associational churches and yet others will be niche or mission churches.

The strength of some form of boundary system is that it prescribes an area of responsibility for a local church, which is a constant reminder for the need to offer pastoral care to all professing Anglicans and to engage in mission outreach to the whole community. At its best a geographical parish system can be the basis of an all inclusive Gospel strategy. However in fragmented urban communities a Gospel strategy based on networks only may yield quicker results in the establishment of new congregations. So for example, a parish may need help when an older traditional community is gentrified, or a parish with a thriving ethno-specific work may better able to plant a daughter church several suburbs away particularly if the other parish is under-resourced and extended in coping with its traditional ministry target. The real difficulty is when the ethos and ministry style of the planting church clashes with the ethos and style of the parish where the new church is to be planted. In this situation some would see merit in the Regional Bishop and his Council being the authorising agency in order to seek to achieve the maximum degree of fellowship in the planting process. Others want to leave such church planting to the vision and energy of individual rectors and congregations.

The following recommendations are made:

- (a) That Synod ask the Standing Committee to prepare legislation to abolish practices which inhibit ministry because of parish boundaries.
- (b) That Synod ask Regional Councils to consider as a matter of priority, the establishment of new congregations in their regions and to apply resources accordingly.

7.2 *Clergy Accountability*

The majority of the Committee is of the opinion that the present system of clergy tenure should be retained. One member dissents from this view and argues for some form of clergy contract. The Committee believes the pastoral role of the bishop should be encouraged and affirmed. The Committee is also of the view that a process of clergy peer review needs to be introduced in order to lessen the likelihood of destructive disputes.

There is the need for the provision of legislation to deal with situations where mutual trust and confidence have been lost.

The Committee recommends that legislation be prepared which will enable an incumbent to be removed from his position in such circumstances, and further, that in the framing of such legislation consideration be given to:

- (a) The Bishop's task to facilitate a fair and proper process in which he plays a pastoral, not judicial role.
- (b) The time it takes for a rector to settle into his parish ministry or recover from a time of difficulty.
- (c) The need to ascertain the conviction of the congregation (or in the case of multi church parishes, the congregations) as a whole not just the elected representatives.
- (d) The role of impartial umpires who are peers.
- (e) The importance of conflict resolution procedures.
- (f) The recognition by the Diocese and the parish of the responsibility for compensation. The aim of this process is to increase the effectiveness of Christian ministry in the parish concerned.

7.3 Licenses and Oaths

The Committee is aware of the difficulties arising from either ignorance or indifference concerning the legal obligations for clergy. These obligations include fundamental ordination oaths and declarations, obligations arising from Synod ordinances and such of the Canons of 1603 as still apply. For example, the law of the Diocese requires that: "All licensed clergy undertake to adhere to the doctrine of (the Anglican Church of Australia), to use the prescribed forms of service and to obey the Archbishop in all legal and honest demands (The 7th Handbook, section 2.2, p 5).

Further, a minister must conduct the required services in the main church of his parochial unit. In branch churches, the minister must continue conducting those services taken by the previous minister unless the written approval of the assistant bishop has been obtained to a variation (The 7th Handbook, section 8.21, p 52).

Section 4 of the 1961 Constitution enables the Archbishop to permit deviations from the Prayer Books provided no principle of doctrine on worship is contravened. An application for a deviation is made by the minister and church wardens, supported by a consent given by a resolution of a majority of parishioners present and voting at a vestry meeting convened for that purpose (The 7th Handbook, section 8.22, p 53).

The Vestures Ordinances states that: "Every minister below the order of bishop saying public prayers or ministering the sacraments or other rights of the church shall wear a decent and comely surplice with sleeves to be provided at the charge of the parish. No minister when celebrating Holy Communion shall wear the alb, the chasuble, the dalmatic, the tunicle (The 7th Handbook, section 8.19, p 52).

The General Synod's Use of the Surplice Canon 1977 Adopting Ordinance 1977 makes for provision for relief from the use of the surplice in certain circumstances, the main situations being in places other than those licensed for public worship and at the Sunday Service in a place licensed for public worship where there is customarily more than one Sunday service, after consultation with the church committee of the church at which the service is or services are to be held (The 7th Handbook, section 8.20, p 52).

The making of oaths, declarations and undertakings is a prior condition to ordination and the issue of a license to minister in the Diocese. Ordinands and ministers make the following:

Oaths

Oath of Canonical Obedience

I,, Clerk, do swear that I will pay true and canonical obedience to the Lord Archbishop of Sydney and his successors in all legal and honest commands. So help me God.

Declaration of Assent

The Anglican Church of Australia, being an Apostolic Church, receives and retains the Catholic Faith, which is grounded in Holy Scripture and expressed in the Creed, and within its own history, in the Thirty-nine Articles, in the book of Common Prayer and in the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.

Accordingly, I do solemnly make the following declaration:

I firmly and sincerely believe the Catholic Faith and I give my assent to the doctrine of the Anglican Church of Australia as expressed in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons; I believe that doctrine to be agreeable to the Word of God; and in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use the form in the said book prescribed, and none other, except as far as shall be ordered by lawful authority.

Form of Undertaking by any Ordained Person who is to Accept Licence in the Diocese of Sydney

I,, being desirous of obtaining a Licence to perform the office of a Minister in the Diocese of Sydney, hereby solemnly undertake that so long as I hold any such licence in the above Diocese, I will use the Surplice in all ministrations to the extent required by law and will neither by myself nor by others permit the use of the Chasuble or other vestment in any Church or Chapel or other place in such Diocese in which I may officiate until such use has been declared legal by the Archbishop of Sydney, or by some Tribunal competent to deal with the matter in and for the same Diocese.

Form of Undertaking by any Ordained Person who is to Accept Licence in the Diocese of Sydney

I,, being desirous of obtaining a Licence to perform the office of a Minister in the Diocese of Sydney, hereby solemnly undertake that so long as I hold any such licence in the above Diocese, I will administer the elements of bread and of wine separately in the Holy Communion.

The Committee recommends that as a matter of urgency the Standing Committee or Archbishop in Council discuss the suitability of our present procedures in the matter of Oaths and Declarations.

7.4 Senior Ministers in the Present Team Ministries

Over the past twenty years, a number of larger regional churches have been established with multiple staffs performing specialist ministries. This trend is likely to continue. In addition, a growing number of ministers are opting to remain in parishes as assistants beyond the normal curacy period of four years. Furthermore, there is a trend emerging of incumbents resigning to become members of a team ministry as senior associates. In cross-cultural ministry situations, ministers of ethno- specific congregations often remain as assistants for many years without any prospect of a change in status.

There is a growing body of opinion that senior members of team ministries should be designated as associate ministers and given a seat on Synod.

The Committee realises that such a move will have consequential effects in further lay representation on the Synod, and urges the Standing Committee and Synod Reform Committee to address the issue.

7.5 Lay Partnership in Ministry

The Committee has given only brief attention to the topic of lay partnership in ministry. It was noted that diocesan readers were prominent in the establishment of branch churches and the substantial growth in church members in the pre- and post-World War II period.

It was agreed that parishes need to give priority to equipping lay leaders to engage in evangelistic and teaching work both in the church and the work place.

It was recognised that lay people in church work need to be assured that they are performing significant work.

It was also agreed that training programmes for lay leaders and other workers need to be given a high priority when funds are being allocated.

8. Recommended Motions

The Committee has asked the Standing Committee to put the following motions to Synod in 1996 at the request of Standing Committee.

- (a) This Synod asks Standing Committee to prepare legislation to abolish practices which inhibit ministry because of parish boundaries.
- (b) This Synod asks Regional Councils to consider, as a matter of priority, the establishment of new congregations in their regions, and to apply resources accordingly.
- (c) This Synod requests Standing Committee to bring to the 1998 session of Synod, legislation which would enable an incumbent to be removed from his position in situations where mutual trust and confidence has been lost. Such legislation should recognise:
 - (i) The Bishop's task to facilitate a fair and proper process in which he plays a pastoral, not judicial role.
 - (ii) The time it takes for a rector to settle into his parish ministry or recover from a time of difficulty.
 - (iii) The need to ascertain the conviction of the congregation (or in the case of multi-church parishes, the congregations) as a whole, not just the elected representatives.
 - (iv) The role of impartial umpires who are peers.
 - (v) The importance of conflict resolution procedures.
 - (vi) The recognition by the Diocese and the parish of the responsibility for compensation.
 - (vii) The process is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of Christian ministry in the parish concerned.

The Committee further recommends the following to the Standing Committee:

- (a) That as a matter of urgency the Standing Committee (or Archbishop-in-Council) discuss the suitability of our present procedures with respect to Oaths and Declarations.
- (b) That the matter of Synod representation of senior associate ministers be addressed by the Standing Committee and the Synod Reform Committee.

For and on behalf of the Committee

RAY SMITH
Chairman

4 February 1997

Note

Since this report was printed, the Standing Committee has considered the 2 recommendations printed on this page. It has invited the Archbishop to consider appointing a committee to make recommendations to him on the form of oaths, declarations and undertakings that are appropriate to the Diocese of Sydney at the present time.

The Standing Committee has discussed the matter of Synod representation for 'Senior Associate Ministers' and other clergy not presently summoned to the Synod, but has deferred further consideration until after the Synod session, noting there is a proposal touching Synod membership for chaplains on the Synod business paper.