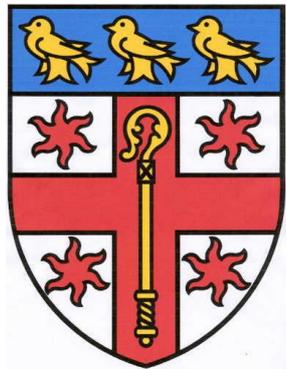


**FIRST ANNUAL SESSION OF THE
FORTY-FOURTH TRIENNIAL SYNOD**



**THE PRESIDENT OF SYNOD
2019 PASTORAL ADDRESS**

Welcome to the first Session of the Forty-Fourth Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide. By my calculation this is the 165th time the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Adelaide have gathered with their bishop in Synod. I want to acknowledge all those who have gone before us engaged in mission and ministry because we stand on their shoulders as we seek to be led by God in mission together.

As we gather, we acknowledge that we are meeting on the land of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains, and acknowledge and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and their relationship with the land. We acknowledge the impact European settlement had and continues to have on the first peoples of this land, and we continue to seek and pray for reconciliation.

I would like especially to welcome Members of Synod who are new to this experience. Some people seem to enjoy spreading horror stories about Synod and some people I know greet the coming of Synod with a groan. My view of Synod is different. Even though by the end of the meeting I have had enough as well, I think Synod is a great chance for us to enact our vision of being united and connected. In the meeting of Synod we have the opportunity to meet people, catch up with friends, worship together, listen to each other respectfully, put our point of view persuasively, be led by the Holy Spirit and make decisions for the good of the mission of the church in this Diocese. Synod is a privilege and we are blessed to share in it.

Having said that, Synod has a particular way of operating and it gets easier to participate the better we understand it. Especially given this is the first session of a Synod please don't hesitate to ask if you are unsure what we are doing or why we are doing it and I will try to find someone who knows the answer if I don't.

One of the people who is here for the first time is Bishop Denise Ferguson who was ordained a bishop on July 21 this year. Bishop Denise brings significant pastoral and administrative skills plus experience of the wider church and we are already benefitting from her ministry. It's great to have you Denise.

It is also good to be able to welcome Greg Thompson to his first Adelaide Synod. Greg and Kerrie have come to Adelaide from Newcastle where Greg was the diocesan Bishop from 2013 to 2017. Greg was formally commissioned last night as the Senior Healthcare and AnglicareSA Chaplain although he actually began his ministry in July, and we know his ministry in that role is already bearing fruit. I will say a little more about Greg's role later in this address. But it is good to welcome you Greg.

A sadness of this Synod is that we will be saying farewell to Amanda Harfield as Registrar and Secretary of Synod. Amanda has been in the role since January last

year and has made a really positive contribution. Amanda finishes at the end of the business of this session, I guess that will be sometime tomorrow afternoon. Thank you Amanda, for all you have done and the way you have done it. We wish you well and assure you of our prayers and best wishes for the next stage of your life and ministry, and we look forward to you continuing as part of the diocese - maybe again as a lay rep in the future.

Diocesan Council has appointed Mr Joe Thorp as Registrar and Secretary of Synod for six months as we undertake a process to make a permanent appointment. Joe is well known being a member of the Cathedral congregation and Chair of the Council of Governors of St Peter's College. Joe has had a significant business and management career and we are thankful he has been able to accept our appointment. I am hopeful we might be able to add to his experience in a positive way.

It feels to me that we have had a good twelve months since we last met. Vision 2022 continues to be pursued across the Diocese. Last year at Synod 'flourishing Anglican communities' was the theme. I have been very encouraged by the number of parishes which either have completed a mission action plan or are in the process of completing one. I know that putting together a MAP can be a slow process and in fact it is often better if it is slow. Just ticking the boxes will lead to missing out on many rich benefits.

An important part of the MAP process is engagement. It is possible for a Parish Council to 'do' a mission action plan fairly quickly. Just as it would have been for the Diocesan Council to come up with its version of Vision 2022 in a few hours. Engagement takes longer and might result in surprising or even annoying outcomes but will lead to a much greater sense of 'buy in' and energy for mission. Mission action planning is not a miracle solution in itself, but, with prayer and the expectation of the leading of the Holy Spirit, is a very valuable tool for engagement and planning. As more mission action plans are developed and implemented, I am sure we will see more flourishing Anglican communities across the Diocese. Though we tend to think of mission action planning being for parishes it need not be limited to parishes at all. I have encouraged Chaplains to also think about how a mission action or strategic planning process could contribute to the mission of their ministry place.

A further step in helping Anglican communities to flourish will be a National Church Life Survey of the parishes in the Diocese next February. This survey will not be paid for by either the Synod or the parishes but by the O'Leary Bakewell fund. The idea is that NCLS will run a survey just for the Diocese of Adelaide in February and then we will join with the National survey in October 2021, then do our own survey sometime in 2023 and join the national survey in 2026 and so on. NCLS has done a great deal

of work looking at vitality in Christian communities and we are hoping that the results of the survey will provide some extra help in terms of things that we can do as a Diocese to assist parishes to be vital and flourish. The survey results also will, I hope, be positive for parishes contemplating their mission action plan, and also an additional tool for those implementing and reviewing their plans.

The survey will also provide us with a moment in time measurement across the Diocese which is important as we try to see whether anything we are doing as part of Vision 2022 is actually contributing to positive change. It is all very well and good to have an aspirational vision but if we can't measure its effect its value may be limited. Parishes will soon be asked to let the bishop's office know how many survey forms they would like and I certainly ask all the parishes to participate. Since there is no cost to participating parishes, I can see only positives in being part of the survey series.

A very significant part of Vision 2022 concerns the discerning, training, forming deploying and caring for leaders in the Diocese, both ordained and lay. This means that St Barnabas College will have an important part to play. I am very pleased that the Reverend Dr Cathy Thomson has been appointed by the College Council to lead the College from the end of the year following two years of excellent work by the Reverend Dr Don Owers who stepped into the breach and has done much more than just plug a gap.

As well as providing discernment and formation for those called to the ordained life, and tertiary level theological education for lay and ordained people, the College will be developing more pathways programs and training opportunities for lay people who want to strengthen their ministry skills and their theological and scriptural knowledge. As I talk to people around the Diocese there is a clear hunger for this kind of development.

The College Council has adopted the phrase 'generous orthodoxy' to guide its direction- a phrase which I find very positive. There is no doubt that our theological college must be orthodox in its teaching according to the formularies of our Church, but will do so with grace and generosity, providing space for discussion, exploration and debate. A key part of the theological education process is helping students understand and express the truth of the Christian faith in ways and contexts that are appropriate for today. As much as possible St Barnabas needs to be a college for the whole diocese and the aim and intention of generous orthodoxy seems to fit the College best for that future.

This year has also been very significant for our Cathedral as it celebrates its 150th year. There have been great celebrations with services, concerts, garden parties,

balls, seminars, recitals, courses, guests and guest preachers. We are blessed to have a beautiful cathedral building and also a vital community of faith ministering from it. I want to pay tribute to the Dean, Frank Nelson, the clergy team and the Cathedral Council for their leadership of the Cathedral community.

One of the major mission partners of the Synod is AnglicareSA. During the past year a small group appointed by the Diocese and AnglicareSA has been quietly working on the development of a Covenant to give fuller and clearer expression to the many and varied ways we are connected with each other and with the wider community. Appointed members include Helen Carrig, Andrea McDougall and Helen Clarke from the Diocese and Ian Byrne, Sharyn Osborn and Grant Reubenicht from AnglicareSA with Peter Burke facilitating the Covenanting process.

Some significant focus areas for the content of the Covenant have been identified, including Governance, Critical Incidents, Property, Chaplaincy, Parish Community Engagement and Partnership, Anglican Schools, Shared Corporate Services, Learning and Development, Marketing and Brand, Employment Matters, St Barnabas College, and the Province of South Australia.

The Covenant is in its early stages of development and will be subject to further consultation and drafting before it is ready for approval and signing by the Diocesan Council and the board of AnglicareSA Ltd.

The development of a Covenant recognises areas of current collaboration as well as identifying ways to strengthen this in the future. As the process of Covenanting continues to completion, it is important to recognise some significant examples of where the spirit of Covenant is already in evidence.

The development of the role of Senior Chaplain, and the appointment of Bishop Greg Thompson to this role, is a significant collaborative step by the Diocese and AnglicareSA and is funded by AnglicareSA. In the language of Vision 2022, this will enable a range of community-based Chaplaincies in Health and Welfare sectors to be further strengthened as an area of innovation, advocacy and ministry.

Allied to this a review of Chaplaincy has recently concluded, with the report submitted on October 1st. This has been the first time in a long time that the views of Chaplains have been sought as to their role and their sense of place in the life and ministry of the church. The review makes it clear that there is a need to lift the way Chaplains are valued and supported, so Chaplaincy is more and more seen as central to our ministry together as a Diocese.

The chief aim of the Senior Chaplain appointment is to more effectively support and mentor our Chaplains and to seek opportunities to grow Chaplaincy as a time honoured and relevant ministry, making available a generous blessing to people and communities in faithful ongoing care and in times of crisis.

Greg Thompson will work closely with Bishop Denise Ferguson who will have episcopal oversight for healthcare and AnglicareSA Chaplains. This in itself indicates that we are seeking to grow our capacity for collaborative ministry as a Diocese through a shared community ministry with AnglicareSA.

AnglicareSA supports the ministry of the church in the wider community beyond the range of services for which it is already well known. Significant among these is the generous support of AnglicareSA for the development of ministry in the Playford area and the role of the National Aboriginal Bishop.

For many years, AnglicareSA has helped to resource the ministry of the Parish Priest in the Parish of Elizabeth in conjunction with the expanding role of the Elizabeth Mission and other service sites in the Playford area in community services, housing and aged care. At this point in time, the ministry of Bishop Tim Harris as Parish Priest and Bishop Missioner to Playford, is funded by AnglicareSA to support the Diocesan contribution to the much hoped for redevelopment of the AnglicareSA Elizabeth Mission as a shared site for ministry and community engagement.

More recently, the Diocese and AnglicareSA have jointly funded the ministry of Bishop Chris McLeod in his developing role as National Aboriginal Bishop. This role focuses on our capacity to respond effectively to the personal and collective participation in reconciliation, or more pertinently now, Makarrata, meaning a 'coming together after a time of struggle'.

I want to acknowledge with thanks the contribution of AnglicareSA for the way it resources and supports the leadership of the Diocese, and the way we focus together on the capacity of the church to engage more fully with the wider community.

One of the very significant problems in our society is family and domestic violence. This affects many people both directly and indirectly including within the church community. The General Synod is sponsoring research currently into domestic violence and its occurrence within the church with initial results hopefully during 2020. One of our goals for next year will be to offer training around the diocese to improve and increase awareness of both the signs and the causes of family and domestic violence and other kinds of domestic abuse, plus the best ways to respond when domestic abuse occurs.

This year's Synod theme is 'united and connected'. It fits well into Vision 2022 - *Our vision and our yearning is to be a Diocese of flourishing Anglican communities, united and connected, whose members are confident and competent to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

United and connected are two concepts which in some ways are similar, although to be united is to be connected at a much deeper level. It is clear that unity, being one, is an important New Testament concept and call for those who identify as disciples of Jesus.

Probably the best-known reference to unity, being one, is in Jesus' prayer recorded in John chapter 17, where in the context of a meal Jesus prays to the Father for his disciples. In that prayer Jesus prays that the disciples may be one as Jesus and the Father are one (Jn 17.11). In other words that the disciples in their relationships with each other may reflect the relationship of the Father and the Son. This is not just a unity of essence but a unity of love. Jesus goes on to pray for those who will believe in the future, that they also might be one (Jn 17.20), and that the disciples might be one so that the world may believe that 'you have sent me' (Jn 17.21). The fact that Jesus prays for unity for the disciples both that they might reflect the relationships within the Trinity and be effective in evangelism is very significant. As disciples of Jesus we need to take his example seriously.

The importance of unity, of being one, is also seen in God's action toward the world. The incarnation means that God became one of us, one with us in Jesus. Not because we deserved that action but because God loves us (John 3.16). This expression of self-giving love is about the salvation of the world (John 3.17). It is important to remember that God did not become one with those who were like-minded with him, but with his enemies effectively. Paul in Romans 5.10 says 'for if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.' In the incarnation God, out of love, became one with his enemies - we humans.

Ephraim Radner in his book *Brutal Unity* says: 'When we begin to grasp how it is that "God reconciles the world in Christ" (2 Cor 5.19) - what it meant for him, how it looked, how it felt, what he did and where he stood - then we will begin to understand the meaning and message of unity itself'(468).

Again, Radner says: 'The church's unity - Christian unity - is the human visage of this act, of these acts (the self-giving of God). It is the giving over of and standing beside of God's self within a "community of enemies", such that its communal reality is

established by the One whose life is love that bears the enemy himself or herself' (460).

Christian unity is not about a collection of the like-minded. Unity doesn't mean we always agree or have perfect peace among us. Unity is about staying together and working together for the glory of God and the spread of the gospel of the kingdom of God. Unity is an expression of God's self-giving love for the other, seen first in the life and ministry of Jesus and called forth in his disciples. Christian unity is a reflection of the reality of God the Holy Trinity in relationship and love. Unity is the call of Christ. Diversity is a gift from God (1Cor 12).

The call to unity is not just a focus for John's Gospel. The epistles of the New Testament are replete with exhortations to unity. So for instance Paul in 1 Corinthians 1.10: "Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose".

In Ephesians we find an echo of Jesus' self-giving love in chapter 4 verses 1-3. "I, therefore, a prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". Paul goes on in the next verses to note seven unities: "There is one body and one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all". These are foundations from which our unity as disciples can grow since they are vital things that we share as gifts we have all received.

It is the case that the church has found unity very difficult from the start. Why do we find unity so hard? Probably because we find self-giving love so hard to offer to each other. Radner says, "it is the lack of charity that is at the origin of disunity" (88). We are so occupied with the rightness of our views, or with convincing the other, or our need to win or exercise power and influence, or sticking with our tribe, or loyalty to networks of interest and obligations that the importance of unity is easily lost.

We are called to love each other with the same self-giving love that Jesus showed even to his enemies. Unity will be an expression of that love. Jesus who washed the disciple's feet, even the one who would betray him. Jesus the one who could have called upon legions of angels to save him but instead willingly went to the cross.

Paul says the greatest gift is love (1 Corinthians 13) and perhaps we need to spend more effort praying for that gift. Perhaps too before we debate any significant matter, we need to spend time with each other, getting to know each other and each other's stories - what makes us tick, and how God has called us to this place in our life. It's

not easy to offer self-giving love to anyone, but it is especially difficult to offer self-giving love to people we don't know and who we can easily characterise with labels. I suspect prayer for each other, especially those with different opinions to us will be very important as we seek to be united, and as we seek to know and obey the Lord.

There have been many, many issues in the past that have challenged the unity of the church and there will be many more in the future. In some ways it might be easier just to gather with those we agree with whatever the topic is. But Jesus thought the unity of his disciples was so important that he prayed for it. He was clear that part of effective communication about him was the unity of those who carried the message.

Paul pleads with Christian communities to be united. To love each other. To bear with each other. Unity is so important because it reflects God and the mission of God. Unity is so important because it is a mission issue. Thank goodness God in Christ didn't just come to those who agreed with him. It probably wouldn't have been us.

The reality is that we live in an untidy world and are part of an untidy church where perfection is in the future and certainly not now. I am reminded of Jesus' parable in Matthew 13 verse 24 and following, one of Jesus' parables about the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God (same thing just a different name). In this parable Jesus begins by saying- "the kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field". The parable then goes on to say that while everyone was asleep an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away so when the plants came up and bore grain the weeds appeared as well as the wheat. The slaves of the householder were keen to get rid of the weeds, but the householder said "no because in the process you might get rid of some wheat as well. Let them grow together until the harvest; and at the harvest time I will tell the reapers, collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned but gather the wheat into my barn".

This is a parable about the kingdom of God and messiness in the present until the kingdom comes. The slaves of the householder were keen to clean things up, to rid the field of what didn't belong, but the householder was not so keen. What seemed a good idea, removing the bad so as to protect the good crop, wasn't so good really. The slaves might make wrong decisions, so in their well-intentioned enthusiasm, what is actually good in the end might be removed in the process of removing bad. This parable says to me be slow to judge no matter what the topic. Be slow to try to purify the church. Instead be gracious, patient, humble and prayerful.

As we confront every test to our unity, because there are many, we need to be gracious with God's grace and love each other with a self-giving love. To bear with each other. To encourage each other. It is worth bearing in mind what are described as the fruit of the spirit - fruit of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians from Galatians 5 – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. That fruit coming as a result of engagement with God the Holy Spirit will contribute to our unity and is a sign of God working in us. As we live out the unity that is ours through our baptism into Christ, we will present to the world an appealing witness to the truth of the story about Jesus. Unity is critical because unity is about mission and unity is key to effective evangelism.

One of the topics about which there is a significant divergence of opinion within the Anglican Church in Australia is the issue of same sex marriage. Things changed for our nation when in 2017 the Australian parliament amended the Marriage Act to remove reference to sex, so that under law in Australia marriage is a union between two people, not as it was before between a man and a woman. Nothing has changed with respect to the understanding of marriage by the Anglican Church of Australia. The doctrine of the church remains as it has been; marriage (or Holy Matrimony) is between a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others freely entered into for life.

Last year at Synod I spoke about a collection of essays being produced by the doctrine commission in response to a resolution by the General Synod meeting in September 2017. That collection has been published as the book *Marriage, Same-Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia*. A copy of the book will be provided to each General Synod member and is available now for free download at <https://www.broughtonpublishing.com.au/marriagedoctrineessays/>.

I understand that there is anxiety about the current situation, where the view of the church and the wider community are not in sync, and some in the church hoping to see change with respect to our understanding of same sex marriage and same sex unions generally. This is not the first time the wider community and the church have had different positions on an important matter. Nor the first time that there has been disagreement over those different positions within the church - the use of contraception and the remarriage of people who have been divorced are two examples where this was the case. It is almost certain that in the future there will be more that is allowed by the State in opposition to the teaching of the Church - euthanasia for instance, and again it is likely that there will be a divergence of opinion within the church about that.

There is anxiety on the part of those who wish to see change to our understanding of same sex unions because they want to see change quickly, believing change to be

right, and there is anxiety on the part of those who wish to see our doctrine and practice remain unchanged believing that is right just as it is.

Anxiety doesn't often produce good results - I suspect that is one thing we could all agree about. Anxiety does not often lead to good relationships - a problem to unity and thus the effective work of evangelism. It is important that we trust God to lead us through this time and in these discussions. We say God is sovereign, so we need to act that way. We say salvation is by grace through faith - that is trust (Eph 2.8), so we need to act that way. It is important we trust God to lead the church rather than being driven by anxiety.

Some people have expressed a desire to know about my position on this topic. I am on the public record as part of the bishop election process in 2016 as saying that my view is that marriage (or 'Holy Matrimony' to use the language of the Book of Common Prayer) is between a man and a woman, excluding all others, for life. That is still my view. In some ways it doesn't matter what I personally think as I am bound to adhere to the doctrine of the church and its canons and ordinances. My role is to try to be a focus for unity for the Diocese and to do my best to help us navigate this time. A resolution of this question is not something for us in Adelaide anyway - we are part of a bigger picture - the Anglican Church of Australia, and whatever resolution there will be, will be led in my view by the General Synod.

Some might criticise us for spending yet more time and energy on an inward-focused debate: the church's doctrine of marriage. Just more chair shifting on the Titanic. But I don't see this as an inward-focussed debate at all. This is a missional question. How do we minister, how do we enact the good news of the kingdom of God in a society where two thirds of voters voted to change the Marriage Act? How do we enact the good news in a church where there is a very significant difference of opinion? Those are difficult questions and we will need the grace and leading of God as we seek to work them through, and we will need to offer grace and self-giving love to each other in the process of discussing and deciding these matters.

We want to be obedient to God. We want to serve the mission of God. How we do that best in our social context has always been a challenge for the church. As we proclaim the gospel of the coming kingdom of God in word and deed and try to be a church that lives that gospel humility is critical. There are enough references to surprises and reversals in the gospel accounts to remind us that what we see and understand now might not be the whole picture. The teaching of Jesus to be very careful about enthusiastic weeding is important to hear. When the Kingdom comes all will be very clear. Until then we need to remember we may not know all there is to be known about the will of God and be gentle and gracious.

Earlier this month I spent most of a week in Sabah Malaysia as part of the full assembly of the Council of the Church of East Asia. CCEA is an Anglican organisation which includes the church in the provinces of Korea, Japan, Myanmar, the Philippines, South East Asia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Australia. I am the Bishop representative to the CCEA from Australia. The assembly which included bishops, priests, deacons and lay men and women (including two people from our Diocese - Carren Walker from the Parish of Broadview and Enfield and Cameron Burr from the Parish of Elizabeth) heard reports from the provinces about their work

I was moved by reports of pressure and oppression where the church is a minority in Muslim and Buddhist majority countries. By reports of difficulty in countries with corrupt governments. By reports of the church struggling in situations of poverty and lack. But what moved me most were the reports of trust in God, commitment to God's mission and enthusiasm for God's mission and the powerful sense of joy in serving the Lord especially in situations of great difficulty and even danger. We in Australia and here in Adelaide are ministering in a different though still very challenging situation amidst social change, a dramatic rise in those claiming no religion at all, and many of our parishes struggling.

I want to thank lay and clergy leaders who in this context of challenge, continue to serve the mission of God through the Diocese of Adelaide. At times it is not easy. It is frustrating and perplexing. But our situation does something really important - it pushes us back to God. It forces us to trust God which in many ways is a great blessing because it is in trusting God that we find peace. It is in trusting God that we are open to the leading of God. It is in trusting God that we actually worship God as God. So, thanks to all who persevere and especially who persevere in trusting God whose church this is and whose mission we serve.

Lynn and I have been with you in the Diocese now for two and a half years. We thank God for calling us here and I want to thank you and the wider diocese for your ongoing prayers and support.

May the Lord help us all to grow in his likeness and trust him more and more as we continue to serve as disciples of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.