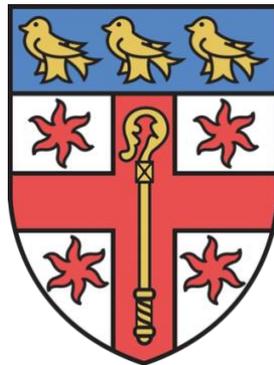


**THIRD ANNUAL SESSION OF THE
FORTY-FOURTH TRIENNIAL SYNOD**



**THE PRESIDENT OF SYNOD
2021 PASTORAL ADDRESS**

Welcome everyone to this meeting of the Synod. A face-to-face meeting which has been in doubt up to the last minute. Signs are good that we will actually be able to complete the program as planned.

As we gather, I acknowledge that we meet on the land of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains, and I acknowledge and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and their relationship with the land. I 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.

As we all know it's been two years since we last met face-to-face as the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide. This time last year though we couldn't meet in person, I think we were feeling somewhat optimistic about 2021 in terms of COVID-19 and the possibility of some normality.

Sadly, that optimism has not translated into reality, with the situation over the past few months just as tricky and uncertain for Australia as the first few months of the pandemic last year. New South Wales and Victoria have experienced significant lockdowns, interstate travel is very limited, and we face the probability of higher case numbers when restrictions are finally eased after significant vaccination numbers are achieved.

We have watched the tragedy of Covid 19 unfold in other countries where awful numbers of people have become ill and many died. I am very aware that this has taken a personal toll among us and our communities with relatives and friends overseas contracting the virus and in some cases dying as a result. Even where the cause of illness or death has not been COVID-19, the closed international borders have meant that visits have been impossible, and this too has caused great heartache. The challenge of COVID-19 has been significant and is certainly not finished yet.

It might just be me, but I think this year has actually been harder than last. Last year it was all a bit new. The adrenalin was flowing. We showed we could change quickly and keep things going. We 'pivoted' well. This year the adrenalin rush is over. The novelty has worn off. Hopes of a quick vaccine rollout and an end to the pandemic haven't been realised as was hoped. The community is feeling tired. There is no fun in this anymore. Too many plans have had to be cancelled. Uncertainty is in the air. This is the case in the wider community and certainly is the case in the Anglican church community. It has felt like this year has been the year of just getting through. And by God's grace we have got through. Far better than many parts of the world which have been suffering terribly. The short prayer - 'Lord have mercy', continues to be very necessary for our community and world.

With the easing of restrictions imminent we may be facing the best times and the worst times. An easing of restrictions and a decision to live with COVID-19 rather than try to eliminate it will mean fewer restrictions and more freedom but, based on overseas experience, it will almost certainly mean a rise in infections. More people being sick will strain our healthcare systems and our workplaces as workers, both paid and volunteer, are off sick. A rise in infections may well lead to increasing tensions and stress, especially here in Adelaide where we have no experience of significant COVID-19 case numbers. It's one thing to live in our relatively safe bubble, but that's going to change, hopefully assisted by very high levels of vaccination, but we are probably in for more challenging times yet.

In the meantime, as we continue into the still largely unknown future we do continue to get through. Taking the opportunity when we can for a break. Trying to see where the Lord might be working and join in where we can.

I want to thank clergy and lay leaders and acknowledge that the past nearly two years have been tough, with frustrating but necessary restrictions and frequent changes to them. Most if not all of our congregations have seen a reduction in attendance and the frequency of attendance. In the midst of all the challenges thank you for your faithfulness in really good pastoral care, in responding well to changing directions, in your commitment to keeping the community as healthy as possible, in continuing to seek the leading of the missionary God, in pointing people to God and God's faithfulness. It has been hard and continues to be hard. Thank you for all you have done.

I also want to thank Joe Thorp, the Secretary of Synod, along with the Synod Office staff and the Bishop's Office staff for their great work in providing information and support when sometimes information was hard to find or pin down.

I am conscious that Synod in 2019, in the light of challenges to collegiality in the Diocese, requested that I form a representative steering committee to plan, implement and conduct opportunities for dialogue and report back to the next annual session of Synod. We did start to get that underway last year and then the lockdown brought it to a halt, and I was in the process of getting things going again this year when the lockdown this year happened and it hasn't been picked up since. I am very happy to pursue this in the next twelve months if Synod continues to believe such an exercise would be useful.

The reality is that God alone knows what the next twelve months will bring. That is of course the case all the time and in any year. We keep praying for the end of the pandemic and an easing of the suffering for millions, which is the right thing to do, but it is fair to say that the pandemic has changed things. We won't be going back to the way things were before March 2020. The blogsite *Church & Culture* (churchandculture.org) makes this observation.

The pandemic did three things:

It sped up change that was already in process; it introduced change we did not foresee; and it created expectations that did not exist before. Together, these dynamics have created a new set of realities for the post-COVID church that must be known by church leaders.

I think it's fair to say that we Anglicans in the Diocese of Adelaide were already in what might be called a *liminal space* prior to the pandemic. The concept of liminality refers to a transitional period, and has its origins in the Latin word *limen*, meaning threshold or doorway. The huge societal change which Australia has undergone in the past century has meant that Christianity is no longer the 'go to' religion in Australia. The Christian church does not hold the place it did, and the Christian worldview is no longer dominant in Australia. Many of our churches were fragile with ageing congregations and a shrinking pool of volunteers before COVID-19. We have well and truly left Christendom, and while we know the ultimate end is the reign of God, the journey to that end is not clear.

There are a number of challenging contexts in which to be a leader. These include leading in an organisation undergoing significant change or decline; leading in a volunteer context; and leading in a context where there are not the resources to throw at the problems. It seems to me we have all three. If you as a leader are feeling stressed or perplexed or worn out it's not surprising. We were already in a challenging context, and COVID-19 has sped that up and exacerbated it.

Having acknowledged that reality, let me lay out another: the mission of God continues. God the Holy Spirit continues to lead the Church in the service of God's kingdom. Things are different now than they were fifty years ago. Things are different now than they were two years ago, and they will continue to change, but the vision of God for the whole creation centred about Jesus Christ continues.

Right now, in this liminal time, this time of change and uncertainty, it is imperative that we find our security in God, and our purpose in participating in God's vision for the world. We don't know the immediate future, but we know God in whose hands the future is held. Trusting God, we pray for insight to see where God is leading, where God is moving and bringing life, wholeness and healing and we try to move to that space to join in.

The vision of the kingdom or reign of God which Jesus embodies is always compelling, but even more so as we face the turmoil the world is in. We pray for God's kingdom to come, God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, and we do what we can to make that a reality now, and let the world know this is God's plan for the future.

Being in a liminal time can be tiring because we humans like to know where we are going. We like to feel as if we are in control even when we are not. It's very easy for us as the Church and as a community in the pandemic to want to go back to normal. But the old normal is gone. We have left that place. Human community is always evolving and changing but COVID-19 has hastened the change. We are on a journey to the next phase. We are in a liminal space. God is leading the Church and God will work in the world. We have the opportunity to trust God who is love.

This is a message we can hear and also offer the community. Every day is a liminal space, but we have nothing to fear as we trust in God's love for the whole creation.

Vaccinations

COVID-19 has changed the world and one of the conversations happening at the moment is about COVID-19 vaccinations. I am fully vaccinated having received the AstraZeneca vaccine. I continue to encourage everyone who can be vaccinated to do so and do so quickly. It is very important that South Australia's vaccination rate be increased.

Numbers of companies, organisations and professions have mandated vaccination for workers and the list grows every day. It looks like vaccination will also be required in order to participate in many activities. We have some experience with that already in that proof of having received the flu vaccine is required to visit many aged care facilities.

We have been blessed by God to have effective, safe, free vaccines against COVID-19. To willingly and knowingly reject that blessing if we can receive it, seems a puzzling thing to do. There is nothing in the Scriptures that would reasonably prevent vaccination, so I can't see any validity in a call for exemptions on the basis of religious belief. In fact, what I see in the Scriptures, especially around the command to love our neighbour and care for the needy and the vulnerable, would encourage me to say that, apart from those who for genuine medical reasons can't be vaccinated, all Christians should be vaccinated as part of our care for those around us.

With more than 75% of eligible South Australians having received a first vaccination, signs are good that we will reach the vaccination levels we need. I encourage members of the Anglican Church to get vaccinated for the good of individuals and the community.

Vision 2022

In some ways the past two years have felt like they have been a bit lost. It feels like we have been at best marking time and just getting through. Mind you in the midst of a pandemic just getting through is actually not bad to be able to achieve, but in the midst of what might feel like marking time I am very aware that people have come to faith in Jesus Christ and been baptised, and numbers of people have confirmed their baptism; people in need have

been served and assisted through our churches and through AnglicareSA; great generosity has been shown, and the pastoral care offered in our churches through this difficult time has been wonderful.

The reports from the organisations in the synod report book illustrate the fact that much has been able to be achieved. This year for the first time the parishes were requested to provide their reports using the fourfold format of Vision 2022: Growth of Discipleship, Flourishing Churches, Innovation and Advocacy and Leadership Development. Most of the parishes have followed this format and I thank the authors for their effort. In this way the reports give us clear understanding of the activities of the parishes in the light of our priorities. What the reports make clear is that, whilst many plans have been thwarted, much good ministry has occurred.

Across the Diocese as a whole, significant moves forward have also occurred. I want to highlight some of those.

One of the goals of Vision 2022 is to strengthen chaplaincy. We have basically two kinds of chaplaincy across the Diocese: school chaplaincy, and everything else, which includes hospital / aged care / Anglicare staff support / prison / emergency relief / surf lifesaving and community chaplaincy. Quite a list really. This year Susan McLeod was appointed as Senior Chaplain for the 'everything else', and under Susan's leadership this very diverse part of our ministry has continued to build and strengthen. We now have thirty paid and volunteer chaplains working across sites in the Diocese, which is really good.

School chaplaincy also continues to strengthen with the Reverend Tracey Gracey succeeding the Reverend Dr Theo McCall as Senior Chaplain for Anglican Schools, and St Peter's College beginning a scheme to offer paid placement for people who feel they might be being called to school chaplaincy. One of our big workforce challenges is having enough school chaplains. The St Peter's College scheme provides an opportunity for people who feel called to school chaplaincy to have a paid ministry role at the College as trainee chaplains while they participate in the diocesan discernment and formation processes and study at St Barnabas College. This is a great scheme and I want to thank St Peter's College for this investment in future school chaplaincy.

Another of our goals is around the discernment, training, and support of leaders. One of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was that people in leadership in the Church receive mandatory supervision. This does not mean managerial supervision, that is to make sure they are doing what they are supposed to be doing, but pastoral supervision, sometimes also known as professional supervision. The aim of this kind of supervision is to help make sure that leaders are able to do their ministry well and are assisted to think through the ministry challenges they face.

The beneficiary of this kind of supervision is not only the person receiving the supervision but the people with whom they minister.

Diocesan Council has adopted a policy which will see pastoral supervision become mandatory for licensed clergy from 2023. In the past twelve months two people have completed recognised training to serve as pastoral supervisors through St Barnabas College. The training continues with another three people currently in training. One of the significant challenges in rolling out mandatory supervision will be having enough qualified supervisors, and the training provided through the College is assisting to meet this need.

This year we were able to run a provincial clergy conference at Hahndorf where clergy from the three Dioceses of South Australia spent time in worship, Bible study, fellowship and learning, with the focus on pastoral supervision. This was the first provincial clergy conference which has been held in many years and encouragement has been given to do it again. I continue to be heartened at the energy across the Province of South Australia for more provincial co-operation.

One of the facets of Vision 2022 is that we want to be united and connected. I have been very encouraged at efforts to enhance connections across the diocese. It is very important that we look for ways to work together and share resources across parish communities. The reality is that the way we are set up with most of our parishes having at best, one paid worker – usually the priest – we are very limited in terms of breadth of ministry that can be offered. One way to address this would be to create bigger teams by amalgamating parishes but the track record of amalgamation, unless that is initiated by the parishes themselves early and not left too late, is not very positive. It may well be better for parishes to look for other parishes with whom they can cooperate.

Over the past year or so, in the midst of the pandemic, a network among parishes in the north of the Diocese has developed which is great. We also have the churches of Somerton Park and Warradale working together and sharing two priests. I would encourage parishes to look for others with whom they can partner. You don't have to wait for me or the Diocesan Council to do anything more. Feel free to initiate those conversations.

Churches will next month have the opportunity to participate in the latest national church life survey. This survey is run every five years in the same year as the census. We ran our own NCLS in February 2020 before the pandemic and I will be very interested to see what if any difference in attitudes or practice has developed during the pandemic. Almost all the churches of the Diocese have signed up to participate in what will be a very flexible process next month. Some parishes have opted not to participate, I think because they feel they only did an NCLS 'ten minutes ago' and maybe the results aren't helpful or don't reflect the local reality, so why do it again? Others may feel the survey has built into the questions an

understanding of the Church and ministry which is foreign. I am the first to say the NCLS is not a perfect tool, but it is the best tool we have. Used consistently over time, I am confident it will help us to not only have a picture of the Church in the Diocese but also see if what we are attempting to do in encouraging flourishing Anglican communities is having any impact.

The past couple of years have felt somewhat frustrating due to the pandemic but by God's grace really good progress on Vision 2022 has been made and I am certainly grateful to the Lord and the people of God in the Diocese for that.

Given that we are now in October 2021, we are heading towards the end of Vision 2022. Over the next twelve months the Secretary of Synod will lead a process to revisit Vision 2022 for the years ahead. My own view is that the vision statement called Vision 2022 still has a lot of milage in it. If there is agreement about that then we might retain the vision statement and continue working to make it a reality and rather than revisiting the vision statement every two or three years, renew an implementation plan every couple of years as we continue to work with the Vision.

Cathedral

In my address for Synod last year I noted the retirement of the Dean of St Peters Cathedral the Very Reverend Frank Nelson and gave thanks for his ministry. Frank and Christine have now moved to Dargaville in New Zealand and settled in well to that rural community. In a couple of weeks, I will be installing Bishop Chris McLeod as the next Dean of the Cathedral. I want to thank Chris for accepting my invitation to this ministry. I will say that Bishop Chris did not seek this appointment but was open to my suggestion that he consider it. He will bring to the ministry of Dean thirty years of experience as a priest, a firm commitment to the mission of God, and his role as the National Aboriginal Bishop, and I am looking forward to that very much.

Saint Barnabas College

I mentioned a moment ago training for people to serve as pastoral supervisors through Saint Barnabas College. This course and the Graduate Certificate of Ministry in the leadership stream have been significant new offerings through the College in the past few years. I want to record my appreciation to the principal, the Reverend Dr Cathy Thomson, who has decided to retire at the end of this month. Under Cathy's stewardship the college has continued to strengthen even with the challenges of COVID-19.

Intimate Partner Violence in the Anglican Church of Australia

In 2017 the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia resolved to ask the Standing Committee of the General Synod to initiate a research project into the prevalence of Domestic Violence in the Anglican Church of Australia. The Anglican Church is the first

Church in Australia to commission research of this kind. The call for research followed a number of enquiries and a royal commission in Victoria into domestic violence. Despite research which indicated domestic violence was a problem in the Church, the issue before General Synod was that no specific data was available for the Anglican Church of Australia. The Family Violence Working Group was established by the Standing Committee of the General Synod and tasked with overseeing the research. The working group sought proposals from a number of reputable research organisations and recommended the Standing Committee engage NCLS for the project.

Detailed reports of the research, its methodology and results can be found on the General Synod website and the challenge of intimate partner violence will be the subject of a motion later in the Synod. The bottom line is that the research found that among those surveyed the lifetime occurrence of intimate family violence was the same or higher among Anglicans as among the general population.

Even if that weren't the result for the Church, it is the case that our community has a problem with intimate partner violence. On average one woman a week is killed in Australia by an intimate partner or former partner. That's tragic and unacceptable. And that doesn't count the number who suffer physical, emotional or spiritual abuse, or who are coerced and controlled by an intimate partner. We need to contribute to the improvement of this situation in the Church and the community.

The Synod will be asked this weekend to adopt what is called the Ten Commitments. These have been developed by the Family Violence Working Group, endorsed by the General Synod Standing Committee, and by our Diocesan Council for consideration by the Synod. Implementing the Ten Commitments will assist Anglican Church communities in the Diocese of Adelaide to more and more, be places where respect for all is taught and lived; where it is clear that abuse of any kind, including control and coercion, has no place; and where people who have suffered intimate partner violence can find help and support.

Care of Creation

In my address to Synod last year I spoke about the need to increase our awareness and care of the whole creation. Care of the environment is always very important for Christians. Psalm 24 verse 1 says that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it. As part of worshipping the Lord we care for the creation that is the Lord's creation. Some speak of a 'climate change emergency', and certainly among the young people of the community there is significant anxiety about the future of the planet. While it is right to resist the temptation to fear for the future, that doesn't mean we should show complacency about caring for the planet in the present. Our commitment to worshipping the Lord needs to include positive action as stewards of the Lord's creation.

From November 1-12 the United Nations climate change conference known as COP26 is taking place in Glasgow. The Anglican Consultative Council has been granted official observer status, so Communion representatives will have the opportunity to participate in the most important climate conference since the Paris Agreement was signed in 2015.

Last month, with that conference in view, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope and the Ecumenical Patriarch released a statement in which they called 'on everyone, whatever their belief or worldview, to endeavour to listen to the cry of the earth and of people who are poor, examining their behaviour and pledging meaningful sacrifices for the sake of the earth which God has given us'. They say, 'this is the first time that the three of us feel compelled to address together the urgency of environmental sustainability, its impact of persistent poverty and the importance of global co-operation'.

This week I, along with other national church leaders, signed a letter to the Prime Minister urging the Australian government to commit to:

- scale up Australia's 2030 emissions reduction target to at least 50% and pledge to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050
- a national climate change policy and a plan for a just, equitable and rapid transition to a low-carbon economy that drives down greenhouse gas pollution
- a just and sustainable transition for communities currently dependant on carbon intensive industries for employment, and investment in renewable energy
- policies that support people, nations and ecosystems that are most vulnerable to climate change, including measures to strengthen the resilience of communities and support people and the services they rely on to adapt to the effects of climate change.

It is good for us to pray for the care of the environment and to raise concerns with political leaders, however, the most important thing is our action concerning the creation; our efforts to reduce our impact; and our readiness to make changes to our lifestyle which preference sustainability.

One of the motions in the papers for this synod comes from the Diocesan Creation Care Network. I want to thank the members of the network for their efforts and encourage engagement with the Network across the Diocese.

Confident and competent disciples of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For each of the past three years I have taken a phrase of Vision 2022 as a focus for my address to Synod. The phrase for this year is the final phrase of the statement: that we desire to be confident and competent disciples of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Discipleship was a major concern for Jesus and therefore it is for us. Jesus called people to follow him (e.g. Peter and Andrew, James and John: Mt 4.18-22) and those who went with him as disciples received his teaching, were commissioned by him and finally, and very importantly, were empowered by the Holy Spirit to live as disciples of Christ.

We dare not undervalue the importance of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of disciples. Jesus told the disciples even after he had commissioned them to wait for the Holy Spirit to come to them (e.g. Luke 24.49). In this Jesus was repeating his own experience where only after the Holy Spirit came to him at his baptism did he begin his ministry.

John V Taylor in his book *The Go Between God* (1972) says: 'The chief actor in the historic mission of the Christian church is the Holy Spirit. He is the director of the whole enterprise. The mission consists of the things that he is doing in the world. In a special way it consists of the light that he is focussing upon Jesus Christ' (p3).

We see in the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit leading and guiding the Christians and their work. Significantly we see in the Acts that the mission of the early church was not smoothly rolled out with impressive strategic management by the apostolic council. What we see are explosions of activity and growth often in unexpected places and situations and among surprising people. The picture is not of the apostles being in control of the enterprise at all, but the apostles and the church generally struggling to keep up with, and to see and to understand what the Spirit was doing. Taylor again says: 'We often speak of the Holy Spirit as the source of power. But in fact, He enables us, not by making us supernaturally strong but by opening our eyes' (p.19). This has as its basis the understanding that God is working in God's world bringing to reality God's vision – the kingdom or reign of God. God is doing this through the Church but not only through the Church.

Finally from Taylor: 'We must relinquish our missionary presuppositions and begin in the beginning with the Holy Spirit. This means humbly watching in any situation in which we find ourselves in order to learn what God is trying to do there, and then doing it with Him'. (p. 39).

We have been commissioned as disciples through our baptism and a constant dependence on the Holy Spirit is critical. Being open to the Spirit's leading, depending on the Holy Spirit, having our eyes opened by the Spirit is really important. We are doomed if we think we can live as disciples without the complete assistance and empowering of God the Holy Spirit. To do so is pride. God's work is done by God. We must remember as we share in the mission of God that it is God's mission which we are called to share. It is God the Holy Spirit who converts, who saves, who gives life, opens eyes, who connects and unites.

The apostles, and then all the disciples, post-Pentecost played their part. But they were not unprepared. Their confidence came not from their academic knowledge but their relationship with God. Their competence came from their training, their learning and their schooling, first by Jesus and then by others with gifts of teaching and their own experience of being led by the Holy Spirit.

We have been commissioned as disciples of Christ through our baptism. To be a disciple is to be a learner. For disciples of Jesus that means we are learning about Jesus and learning from Jesus, so we are shaped and formed into the likeness of Jesus with Jesus' attitudes and priorities and style.

It is also clear that Jesus understood his disciples would participate in and continue his work. During his ministry he sent them out ahead of him (e.g. Matthew 10). Each of the four gospels has Jesus commissioning his disciples. Each of the four is slightly different and highlights different aspects. Matthew has the disciples being told to make disciples (Matthew 28). Mark has Jesus commissioning the disciples to 'go into all the world and proclaim the good news (gospel) to the whole creation (Mark 15). Luke has Jesus telling the disciples they would be his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1.8). John has Jesus telling the disciples: 'as the father has sent me so I send you' (John 20.21). In each there is a sense of the disciples continuing Jesus' work. Theirs was not the same as Jesus, but they were to witness to Jesus; to proclaim the gospel of the reign of God by word and deed.

The disciples were certainly called to be learners, but learners so they could minister. So they could witness to what God in Jesus had done. So they could continue to point to the kingdom of God and to Jesus, God among us. So they could express the hope they had, and show Christ's love especially for those in need as a foretaste of the coming new creation.

I think in our contemporary church we may have forgotten that all the baptised are called to be disciples, ministers, sent into the world by Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit. All who accept their baptism, who are followers of Jesus, are called to be disciples, ministers, fellow workers with Christ. And that means more than filling rosters at church, necessary though that is for the effective running of the organisation. It means being witnesses for Christ where we live our lives. This is not being a passive recipient of religious services. Nor is it just being a person who believes in Jesus. It is to be a minister, a servant, a worker for Christ. Maybe we could invent a new greeting for our liturgy. Instead of saying 'we are the body of Christ. His spirit is with us'. We could say 'we are the workforce of Christ. His spirit is with us'.

A right understanding of discipleship means that in the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide there are thousands of people who have accepted their baptism, who are seeking to be disciples of Jesus. A very small subset are in holy orders as deacons, priests or bishops. The vast

majority are not. We are thousands of potential and actual workers, some paid but mostly unpaid workers for Christ. But we tend not to think of ourselves that way. We think of ourselves as Christians, as people who believe in Jesus, as members of the Church, but not so much as disciples who are learning so we can share in the ministry of Christ. So that we share the gospel with others. So that we can minister with prayer. So we are confident with the Bible and can help others to be the same. So we have the motivation and skills to help the poor and the weary, the outcast and the hurt. So that we can lead others in worship and offer pastoral care. So we can help bring peace and reconciliation. So we can lead the communities of the Church. So we can care for the whole creation.

We haven't as a diocese invested much in the way of resources into helping the people of God grow in discipleship, which means grow in sharing the ministry of Christ. We have left that to individuals or the individual parishes, which means there is significant variety in capacity and a whole lot of duplication of effort.

Given that our Vision says that we yearn to be confident and competent disciples of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit it seems to me that putting some conscious effort and resource into helping the people of the Diocese be more confident and competent disciples of Christ is important. As Stefan Paas says in his book *Pilgrims and Priests – Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society* (2019), 'in the end there are no missional structures, only missional people' (P.13).

This growth in ministry capacity might happen in all sorts of ways, and I suspect will involve all kinds of learning and development and ministry opportunities and resources. We haven't, as a synod, invested greatly in this. We have left it to individuals and individual churches. I think we are at a point in history where we need to make some investment as a Synod.

Diocesan Council has accepted my suggestion that we establish a learning community in the Diocese. A community which will focus on assisting on a diocesan basis the process of the forming of confident and competent disciples of Christ. The learning community will include Saint Barnabas College which will continue to offer quality tertiary level programs accredited by Charles Sturt University. The goal of the learning community will be the formation of competent and confident disciples of Christ. There will be a leader of the learning community who will connect learners as individuals and groups with resources and programs and opportunities to help them towards the goal – confident and competent disciples of Christ wholly dependent on the Holy Spirit. We will be starting the recruiting process for the leader of the learning community very soon.

This is a very modest step. It is not grand in any way, but we need to take this step if we are in any sense serious about being and making and forming confident and competent disciples

of Christ who know they depend on the Holy Spirit. In the end there are no missional structures, only missional people. We are in a liminal time. It is hard to know what the church will look like in the future, but whatever the future is, there will be need for competent and confident disciples of Christ, who depend on and are attentive to, the Holy Spirit.

In Conclusion

Thank you again to all who have worked so hard to maintain and develop the witness of the Church in what has been another very challenging year. People have pulled together and worked together very well and that's been great. I hope we take the opportunity for a rest around the end of the year before having a look at what 2022 might bring.

No matter what else is going on, the Holy Spirit will be continuing the mission of God. May we be filled and continually filled with the Spirit to see what he is doing and where he is working and join in as increasingly confident and competent disciples of Jesus Christ.