

# Charge to Synod



## Presidential Address to the First Session of the Fiftieth First Synod of the Diocese of Newcastle

Together with the Record of Visitors to the Diocese, and the  
Record of Appointments, Ordinations, Resignations and Retirements

**The Rt Rev'd Gregory Thompson**  
Bishop of Newcastle

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2014  
Bishop Tyrrell Anglican College

Wiyalita Yirri Yirri – from Awabakal meaning ‘we gather to speak in a sacred way’

I acknowledge with my words and my spirit the abiding custodianship of the Awabakal, Dakinjung, Wonnarua, Worimi, Geawegal and Biripi peoples on whose land our church exercises ministry in the name of Christ, and pray that we together may walk as one people.

It is good to be here as the people of God in this Diocese. We gather to celebrate our relationship one with another, to give thanks for God’s faithfulness over the last year, and to listen well to each other and the voice of Christ who calls us to live holy lives.

This is not my first presidential address to a Synod but it is my first presidential address to you and I would like it to be a little different. Rather than being the only voice that engages with the issues, I want you to spend some time engaging with each other. During the address, I will pause twice and pose questions which I would like you to explore with the people around you for a few minutes. In this way we will bring our many voices to the issues before us and during the course of Synod hopefully move towards speaking with one voice. So let’s begin this important journey together.

### **Safe Uncertainty**

Recently, at the National Anglicare Conference I heard a presentation based on the work of Dr Barry Mason<sup>i</sup> on helping young people in out of home care move toward a healing pathway. He explored the ideas of safety and certainty and contrasted them with their opposites – unsafety and uncertainty. The care providers from Anglicare Victoria reflected on how the idea of Safe Uncertainty helped young people attend to underlying needs, provide support and assist them towards taking responsibility for their lives in the face of an ever-changing world.

Mason reflects on how certainty in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has crumbled, and that uncertainty is the dominant lived experience of relationships. The givenness of life has been replaced by sometimes chaotic and bewildering times. In this climate, governments and organisations have sought greater degrees of certainty rather than living with dilemma or curious enquiry. Uncertainty, Mason suggests, can either drive us towards working at more certain outcomes in helping people which may foster more institutional behaviour and codifying culture in practice, or be the gift that enables us to be more curious,

be open to alternate pathways, to promote greater ownership by people with the decisions they must make for a healthier future.

Mason reflected that his clients mostly had two states to their dilemmas. Either they are living with unsafe uncertainty – living with feelings of great insecurity and with few options to enable these feelings to go away. Or they are living with unsafe certainty – living with anxiety and fear, yet believing they are very clear about what should be done. They have come to see only few options to their dilemmas - usually requiring someone else to change or to take the burden of responsibility of change away from them.

In response he proposes the practice of safe uncertainty in which emerges “a respectful, collaborative, evolving narrative, one which allows a context to emerge whereby new explanations can be placed alongside rather than instead of, in competition with, the (other) explanations...”p194. It is a practice that ensures a person is safe emotionally, in order to explore different possibilities in the choices they are making for themselves.

As part of the Anglican tradition we have had a long culture of certainty as the dominant environment of the Diocese which has carried high levels of participation where everyone knew what was expected, how things worked, and resources and vocations met the needs of parishes. We now live in different times to that of the certainty model of Anglicanism. We have deceived ourselves if we have thought this has changed only recently. All the overseas reports for decades have indicated generational decline in Western Anglicanism and here in our Diocese we have been shrinking in numbers and vitality since the 1950's. The society that in the past embraced us on the hill, asks whether the light should be left on to shine over them.

The question of closing church buildings is not recent as some might suggest. Consider the many buildings that have been closed over the last 3 decades in this Diocese. The rural churches have suffered the greatest as population and work has left small communities. Urban congregations are also being asked to consider both their stewardship and their mission in these changing times. Certainty has been replaced by uncertainty. The General Synod has been investigating the viability of dioceses that is not simply about repaying debt but the capacity to be a community of mission that generates vocations, leadership and ministry. We have believed that the generations that came after us would simply be imprinted with our culture and take up where we have ended. Such a legacy is not reflected in the church connections with the wider community or to the attendance to worship in our congregations.

*So, to my first pause for discussion – do you think we have worked for greater certainty in our life as a Diocese rather than facing uncertainty? What have been the indications of this in our decision making?*

### **Unsafe History**

Alongside the decline in certainty of the dominance of Anglicanism in our culture we have been confronted by our own unsafe history. The power and positions entrusted to some of our leaders has been abused and the vulnerable have been terribly hurt. The Royal Commission into our life and the more recent Operation Arinya 2 by NSW police into these matters are not only about individuals but about the systemic culture that did not attend to the profound breach of trust and criminal behaviour in our Diocese. These things happened in our church and happen in our wider community.

As I have come to know the Diocese through pastoral visits, meeting clergy and the regional listening meetings I was struck by how little the issue of abuse was raised given the significance of abuse and the scrutiny we are under. I wondered if it was because only a few places are affected but the literature on churches and religious systems that have been affected would suggest otherwise.

One commentator on sexual abuse in the Church suggests that

When a painful secret or suspicion dwells within an organisational system, the system will sometimes develop subtle and usually unconscious defences against recognising the disturbing reality. Patterns evolve that foster confusion and unclarity ... Persistent organizational chaos may be rooted in a pattern that serves to distract people from a painful chapter in corporate history (Knusden<sup>ii</sup>).

Another writes

Public attention to the misconduct of a small but significant number of clergy has had a powerful impact on nearly all members of that profession. As pastors and others see the sacred trust to which they have devoted their lives being violated by others, they experience genuine grief and anger in regard to their own vocation. They find themselves estranged from their particular ministry entrusted to them, wondering if their own instincts are correct and fearing that their people no longer respect them. They eye their religious superiors with suspicion, doubting their competence and questioning their good will (McDonough<sup>iii</sup>).

I think there is evidence to suggest we have been struggling with the impact of abuse for some time but we are still finding ways to talk about it. This is especially so in a number of places most affected but it is something for all of us.

By the end of this year one expression of our right response will have been financial payment to some people who have brought their concerns to the church. Over the last few years under the leadership of the Diocesan Council working closely with each of the Bishops, we will have spent over \$3 million dollars. At the end of the year the loan from the Trustees to meet these costs will be at \$2 million. The Diocesan Council has been working hard to ensure that we respond well to people and ensure we sustain mission and ministry. The incoming Diocesan Council will have an important responsibility in the ongoing management of these matters that may require much greater consideration by the Synod next year.

We cannot minimise the loss of reputation nor the damage to the mission of Christ because of these abuses. We have sought to attend not only to historic cases of abuse but ensure a safe environment for the vulnerable. We need to continue to be a change agent for the wider community as we are open to public scrutiny on our life, have a readiness to apologise and compensate survivors of abuse and as we seek to live the restoring work of Christ in our parish communities – with both offender and survivor and their families.

### **Unsafe Certainty**

At a number of emotional and spiritual levels our Diocese has had a culture of unsafe certainty in Mason's terms. Our church has had a culture of power over others that has meant people feeling unsafe, unable to participate and not sure whether they belong. It has not simply been about our inability to attract younger generations, but about the kind of belonging we are offering which companions people and brings them into a community which is welcoming and nurturing of younger generations. The historic abuse legacy is an indication of not having a cultural setting that is attractive and accountable in the nature of its relationships and which enable people to explore their questions and consider the Christ story as offering life in abundance.

have spent some time wondering what were the habits or practices of this and other dioceses in which sexual abuse by clergy and lay people was able to occur without being noticed or, if noticed, not acted upon. I have been wondering what in our life has been allowed or left unaddressed which have resulted in vulnerable people experiencing abuse in our midst. There is so much that has been written about abuse and the culture that gives rise to it

that it is impossible to cover it all in an address such as this but I want to offer some insights from others to see if they make sense to you –

The Catholic Bishop, Geoffrey Robinson writes,

All sexual abuse is first and foremost is an abuse of power. It is an abuse of power in a sexual form. Unhealthy ideas concerning power and its exercise are always relevant to the question of abuse. ... If the governing idea of how to act as a priest or religious is tied to ideas of lordship and control, then, no matter how benevolently ministry is carried out, an unhealthy dominance and subservience will be present (Robinson<sup>iv</sup>).

Another commentator says;

Whatever else their congregations believe them to be, sociologically churches are hierarchies of unequal power. They render some who trust the presumed benevolent motives of more powerful persons and authorities more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse than others (Shupe<sup>v</sup>).

Yet another says;

People in power have used their privileged position to behave as they pleased with people in the parish, and too many bystanders have supported them in their sense of entitlement. ... Entitlement leads to the abuse of power, one form of which is sexual and includes harassment, molestation and sexual assault. To prevent sexual abuse, an honest appraisal of the power dynamics in the congregation is essential. The inappropriate use of power needs to be named and stopped (McClintock<sup>vi</sup>).

My reading of the Diocese is that there have been seasons in which clergy have been allowed or encouraged to exercise considerable power which some have then used in abusive ways. This has been welcomed and copied by some lay people.

### **A Safe Church**

A safe church is at first shaped by the gospel commands of love and service where we treat all people with the fundamental dignity they are entitled to as bearers of the image of God and beloved by Him. A safe church will become more evident when we affirm the appropriate exercise of power, when people in leadership call for right accountability of those they lead, and when misuse of power is named and changed.

- Imagine a parish council requiring members to properly justify their criticisms or otherwise not making them.
- Imagine clergy saying to each other we will not listen to rumours.
- Imagine people involved in ministry knowing their role with greater clarity and when they were being asked to exercise it. Imagine us moving away from language that excludes people.

It is salutary for us to recognise that our past failures have caused deep wounds in some people which may never be healed. In our community there are people who in childhood were placed in our care for a children's activity in a parish or children's home whose fundamental dignity was betrayed by a member or members of the church abusing them including horrendous sexual abuse.

Simply having policies and procedures is not enough. We have to have an attitude of mind or culture that recognises what has occurred, is committed to responding to their harm and ensuring that people have a present knowledge that they are safe, loved and belong.

An early 20<sup>th</sup> century English Judge, Lord Moulton described three domains of human interaction this way; "the first is the domain of law, 'where', he said, 'our actions are prescribed by laws binding upon us which must be obeyed.' At the other extreme is the domain of free choice, 'which', he said, 'includes all those actions as to which we claim and enjoy complete freedom.' And in between, Moulton identified a domain in which our action is not determined by law but in which we are not free to behave in any way we choose... Moulton considered the area of action lying between law and personal preference to be 'the domain of obedience to the unenforceable.' In this domain he said, 'obedience is the obedience of a man to that which he cannot be forced to obey. He is the enforcer of the law upon himself.' He called this domain Manners – moral duty, social responsibility and beyond that to cover 'all cases of doing right where there is no one to make you do it but yourself.'<sup>vii</sup>

With unsafe experiences we have sought certainty in our church. We recognise that change needs to come if we are to survive, but only for others not ourselves. While holding on to our own power, we are certain that a bishop can sort out those others, or a new ordinance demand change in others or a new program deliver change in others.

Our faith community has too often been unwilling to look into its own heart and consider the holy life Christ is calling it to. We have been unwilling to let go

of tribal self-interest and self protection and enter the journey that Christ beckons us to follow. Philippians 2:4-5 “Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.....” We want the certainty of change that does not make me responsible or ask me to change. This is not discipleship nor faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Bishopscourt**

The Synod will focus on the place of Bishopscourt and its future. I hope the Synod consider the economics of having this property, the suitability of it as the home of the Bishop and family, and the historic sentiment of previous bishops who lived within it. It must also consider the message for the wider society about a leader who lives in this setting yet must attend to the unsafe history, consider the viability of parishes and their leadership without full time stipended clergy, the capacity of the Diocese to meet the ongoing payments made to abuse survivors and the engagement by a pastoral leader who must walk with the wider community and not be regarded from another world.

In our debate are we seeking to re-inhabit the certainty of our history by having the Bishop remain in Bishopscourt? Is this the act of reassurance that helps us in uncertain times bear witness to the mission of Christ? Have we understood the season of our mission, and our identity to minister in a world at best disinterested in the past glories but wanting to know about our integrity and passion for today?

The nature of our decisions and actions to bring healing or health to our communities is often trying to bring both safe and certain outcomes. Safety is important for a sense of security, love, and wellbeing. We show this in our work place health and safety policies and with the child protection training and care required by government authorities but also I hope reflecting genuine concern for those who use our buildings. We seek to be open to ongoing training and education to ensure our ministries offer a safe harbour and support to those in need.

However, the desire or need for certainty in an ever-changing world tends to lead our church towards structural certainty and often rigid solutions. Our inner call to rescue and assist the hurting can lead us to take responsibility away from individuals, groups and churches who ought to share in the process of finding a way forward where the many may contribute. Our reflex to deal with threats internal or external can lead us to seek codifying behaviour that offers certainty but may result in passive aggressive responses to ‘head office’

telling us what to do. The recent two way listening process in the Diocese led me to think that we have to acknowledge the many uncertainties of our times and to help people both know they are loved and that they with support and leadership can endeavour to address the challenges they face as participants rather than spectators.

### **Two Way Listening**

The 17 Listening Meetings with over 1,000 people in 6 months across the Diocese has helped me to hear the call for safety in our Anglican tradition with attending to the grass roots relationships that are the DNA of life. I have heard people desire a Bishop who will assist in times of conflict, strengthen our identity as Anglicans across the diversity of our Diocese and to ensure we are a welcoming church where people will be respected and valued with the gifts they bring. I have heard conflicting views about the remedy for our declining vitality. I have heard calls for Diocesan intervention and for the Diocese not to intervene. I have heard less contributions to the Diocese, yet more support and assistance to the struggling edges. I have heard apologies are needed for discussing the future of church property, and apologies for not rationalising our physical footprint of over 400 properties. I have heard that people would like forums to be held to enable the conversations take place in a safe respectful environment. Others have absented themselves because conversations across parishes, and between laity and clergy have been unsafe for them.

Listening is part of the discipline of being in communion with Christ and with one another. St Paul teaches both in letters to the Corinthians and in Romans that we are interconnected and shaped for relationship that allows gifts, voices and grace to come together. Effective two way listening is a practice of providing a safe place for different views to be heard and of discerning the mind of Christ and the momentum of the Spirit among us. While the structures and meetings are the practices of good stewardship and wise counsel, listening provides for openness, curiosity with enquiry and consideration of views likely to be extinguished without space and time for conversation. Trust needs to be watered with a genuine interest in people beyond the inner circle. Trust grows as people permit conversations who do not want to caricature, blame or deny the dignity of those who are different from us. Trust grows as we recognise the need of being a Diocese which is primarily interested in God's kingdom and less concerned about our own influence upon decisions. Trust grows as we encourage faithfulness in others and opportunity to serve and participate without criticism.

Uncertainty says Mason is the state of our times and often our lives and so it could be said that the Diocese “would like certainty Bishop”. It has been whispered in the wings that you need the grand plan, certainty about our life. I can’t give it to you and God doesn’t either. Heb 11:1 “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” What I have been seeking to do for you is set the fire of our leadership and culture, and heighten our need for a spirituality which is shaped by the gospel of Christ and watered in prayer. Momentum then comes from the grace of God working upon responsive hearts and minds.

When we desire safety with practices of certainty we will tend to move from active two way listening. It tends to reinforce what the Scriptures say for our particular group and an unwillingness to hear the Word of God through another person. It heightens our desire to have someone take the burden of the decisions of our leadership and discipleship in the call of Christ. Leadership in the process of momentum for our church is to remind ourselves of the promises in Christ and to call us to faith when we do not know the outcome or solution.

Recently in a commissioning address I heard the story of a priest having car trouble in a heavy rain with flooding. An anonymous friend pulls over and assisted. The preacher described leadership of the helper in this way as an example of how to lead others;

‘That man responded to my situation in the midst of the storm; in that moment he chose to make my life his life. After the startling introduction, he told me he saw that I needed to move. He rolled up his sleeves to help me. I accepted his authority, not because he was my boss, but because I trusted his goodwill and his wide perspective, his super vision. In turn he trusted me to bring my resources and knowledge to solving our problem. He kept me company and encouraged me and throughout the episode the kingdom of heaven winked at us out of the corner of its eye. He did not divert me from my path; rather, he helped me back onto it, naming my destination well, ‘home by teatime.’

Leadership is not simply about having answers but being prepared to make a way forward with others with prayer, reflection upon Scripture and tradition, genuine conversations and a willingness to be open to what the Spirit is saying among us.

It is like the gardener who identifies which plants grow best in the sun or in the shade, in clay or more in sand. The gardener wants plants that will flourish in

the best place not be exotic to the context and perish when the gardener is no longer there. Leadership works with the context and enables a way forward from the ground up. Such leadership seeks the transformation of our lives in the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are called daily to let go of all that hinders the cause of Christ and take hold of what opportunities we see to love and serve Christ in our wider community.

### **We Need to Set the Fire of our Life Together**

We need to set the fire of our life together. St Peter who denies his discipleship before a fire at night (John 18:18), steps onto a beach before a fire to hear Christ ask him “Do you love me more than these?” (John 21:9, 15). Jesus speaks of the fish on the fire and yet the old patterns of behaviour that Peter prefers. Dear Synod of Newcastle do you love these old ways better than the uncertain future Christ is calling you into? At Jesus’ fireplace, while we may have darkness about, it is also where we may truly hear his voice calling us to follow.

The gift of a campfire in the Australian outback reminds me that we are travellers in a country learning and listening. The fireplace is a place to cook, to gaze into and reflect, and to hear others share their stories on the journey. The blessing by the fire begins with how we set it. To see First Australians set a fire is to watch the innate reading of the place, the wood needed and the capacity of the fire to cook food, warm and build community at night. As leaders in this Synod I’m calling you to set the fire for our mission and community. By the culture you nurture, by the virtues you live, by the openness to listen to one another, by the faith you have received so that the fire lit by the Holy Spirit warms, sustains and blesses not only we who are in church but the community we are a part of. This is gracious space where we can consider our life and ask ourselves “Who is most vulnerable today that needs Christ’s love and justice? And who is not at our camp fire?”

I call you to the fireplace of common good, common grace and common prayer. Common good is mentioned in early Christian writings “Do not live entirely isolated, having retreated into yourselves, as if you were already (fully) justified, but gather instead to seek together the common good.” (Epistle of Barnabas). Jeremiah brings God’s word to encourage common good and a shared future when he says to those in exile “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” Archbishop William Temple who in 1942 wrote Christianity and Social Order believed that the responsibility for creating a just society was shared between Church and society.

He set out six propositions for a Christian society;

- Every child should find itself a member of a family housed with decency and dignity.
- Every child should have an opportunity for education up to maturity.
- Every citizen should have sufficient income to make a home and bring up his children properly.
- Every worker should have a voice in the conduct of the business or industry in which he works.
- Every citizen should have sufficient leisure—two days' rest in seven and an annual holiday with pay.
- Every citizen should be guaranteed freedom of worship, speech, assembly and association.

The fire place of common good gathers us to work with God's justice agenda. A common good that works for fairness and equity, and the opportunity for every person to be healthy, fed, safe and free to enjoy abundant life.

I hope in future addresses to the Synod to have a much greater balance of concerns with a focus on the wider community, national affairs and international matters. None of us is untouched by the travesty of the barbarism being played out in Iraq and Syria and we pray for those, especially in our defence forces, working to ensure the peace and well-being of citizens of the region, especially minority groups. At the same time we are wise enough to know that in the complex web of past decisions there have been some mistakes and some alliances which have aided the current state of affairs. As we respond as a nation, I am watchful and concerned that the easiest but not necessarily the best response of Government is to offer certainty through slogans which damage our international standing and undermine our commitment to basic human rights.

Common good in the church recognises that we are one of another (Romans 12), and we have an inherent duty to care and nurture an environment where people matter irrespective of their background and that they are able to participate in the community of Christ. The structures and attitudes that subvert such good do not reflect our calling to live gracious lives. The common good of our society requires people of all faiths or none not to be silent when injustice and prejudice prevail. This diminishes God's purposes for a world he made and intended, and which Christ calls us to pray and work for - a kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

## **Social Justice Network**

The emerging Social Justice network of the Diocese is being shaped around a growing number of people who seek to enable parishes and agencies to consider and support action for the common good of society, particularly those whose voices are dismissed. Whether it is partnering Samaritans with works of compassion, or sharing with the Uniting Church and Roman Catholic community in the referendum on the recognition of First peoples in our Constitution, or the call for a compassionate and just response towards refugees who come seeking sanctuary in our country, our Diocese will respond to the prophet Micah's call to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. Let us pray and work together for the wellbeing of our church and nation.

Setting the fire well for our common good in the church and for works of justice in our society requires a culture where we may in Mason's terms develop Safe Uncertainty by encouraging a curiosity to explore and question, and seek directions where we are all participants and committed to Christ like transformation of our lives. Such gracious space will gather diverse people, critique the status quo, nurture transforming change and transformational leadership, promote ethical leadership and knowledge of core values, foster integrity and moral courage and recall hope in uncertain times. (Pat Hughes and Bill Grace 'Gracious Space: A Practical Guide to Working Better Together'.)

## **A Fire for Common Good and Well Being**

We need to set the fire for common good that enables health and well-being. We are not the first to have concerns about church culture and well-being. They are questions that are not isolated to either this Church or Diocese.

I was interested to learn recently that the state of South Australia has adopted a way of thinking about wellness based in the positive psychology of Martin SELIGMAN. Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths, characteristics and actions that enable individuals and communities to thrive.

*It encourages people to*

- be as concerned with strength as with weakness
- be as interested in building the best things in life as in repairing the worst
- be as concerned with making people's lives fulfilling as with healing pathology

- develop interventions to increase wellbeing, not just to decrease misery.<sup>viii</sup>

I have been interested to learn that organisational psychologists (who want societies, organisations and the people within them to flourish) have been engaging with similar ideas. A number of them have explored the idea of VIRTUES as leading to the best in the human condition and behaviour. Much of the contemporary writing focuses on six key and similar virtues. Scholars from the University of Massachusetts name the key virtues as **faith, courage, compassion, integrity, justice and wisdom**<sup>ix</sup>.

At the risk of over-simplification, these might be described as

**Faith** - the relationship with God and discovering what gives people meaning

**Courage** - the ability to engage uncertainty with dignity in the face of opposition

**Compassion** - all that enables us to recognise, be with and respond to people in suffering

**Integrity** - the practices that promote honesty and protect us from excess

**Justice** - the pursuit of what enables healthy community and common good

**Wisdom** - the journey of acquiring and applying knowledge

I am wondering whether across the Diocese, these virtues might become a marker in our conversation about our practices. They are akin to the teaching of St Paul on the fruit of the Spirit and of the grace of the Spirit upon our life together.

Rotary have adopted the Four-way test as their framework for what they think say, and do.

- FIRST: Is it the Truth?
- SECOND: Is it Fair to all concerned?
- THIRD: Will it build Goodwill and Better Friendship?
- FOURTH: Will it be Beneficial to all concerned? ([www.rotaryfirst100.org](http://www.rotaryfirst100.org))

What would it be like if part way through our work at Parish Council or the Trustees or Ministry Team or Diocesan Council we asked “Is this proposal promoting integrity?” or “Is this proposal promoting justice?” Or “Are we being faithful?” I am convinced that a conversation around virtues is a significant step towards promoting flourishing and wellness across the Diocese.

I also draw your attention to the recent General Synod 'Being Together' which sets out expectations of how as a church we honour and respect one another and work at differences and nurture wellbeing in our community.

I think there are some other practices that we should engage in to enable each other to flourish across the Diocese –

- Let's stop having meetings that go for 2 hours without a break! We need time to build community around the kettle as well as around the table.
- Let's encourage our clergy to go on holidays and long service leave. We need to promote the Sabbath as a time for resting and delighting in God.
- Let's be engaged with the world, taking time in our churches and agencies to celebrate with our communities in their culture and environment, and being engaged in supporting common good that blesses God's world.
- Let's look on each other with love! We are not perfect and we are all growing grace! Let us encourage one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24)

*And so a second moment for discussion – can we develop opening and closing prayer for our meetings that reflect that our decisions before God are being shaped by VIRTUES and reflect the character of holy living? How do we have mindfulness around these VIRTUES in the discussions of our meetings?*

### **Setting the Fire for Missional Leadership**

I have sought to provide renewed leadership to set the fire for God's mission among us and through us by outlining some of my expectations, the details of which are in the SPECIAL AD CLERUM I released last week (attached) to the clergy and that I hope will be discussed by every parish. I affirm the different forms of missional leadership and governance in place in the Diocese. I affirm clergy in local ministry and make the calling, nurturing and sustaining of clergy in local ministry a priority. I state my intention that the formation of clergy for local ministry and stipendiary ministry be more integrated and for it to take account of the particular needs and contribution of those who explore their vocation later in life. I affirm the vital importance of lay education and development and the need for this to be developed at a regional level.

Recognising the practice of two way listening, responding to the momentum for life in and through parishes and agencies, providing support and encouragement and enhancing greater levels of communication I have announced the appointment of regional leaders to help set the fire for mission and well being. I have heard for the request for such leadership and so I have

commissioned Archdeacons to work across regions part time to resource and support the parishes, through the incumbent, in envisioning ministry, making mission plans, trying new things and reviewing the experience. I want the Archdeacons to promote partnership with local Anglican agencies and schools and to serve the clergy and parishes as coaches, mentors and guides.

### **Developing Parishes**

It was stressed at the regional listening forums that the incumbents of the parishes have the call and responsibility to provide leadership for creative and visionary ministry. Like many, I have been encouraged by the work in the Church of England on Mission Action Plans. It is becoming more and more evident that where parishes plan their mission systematically growth, in its various domains, is possible. The responsibility for planning must be with the local parish – the incumbent, other clergy, lay leaders and people working together. I have an expectation that by the beginning of 2016 every parish will have a Mission Plan that is reflected in its budget and part of its planned giving. I want the bishops, the archdeacons and the diocesan office to be a support to this planning.

I have been delighted to learn of the contribution that programs like Mainly Music and Messy Church have made to ministry to with children, young people and their families. This direction forged a few years ago under CEY ministries is making a difference and we are seeing more family workers employed now in the Diocese than ever before. It is still at very early stage but I want to affirm the positive signs I am seeing. The development of parish partnerships for this sort of ministry has been the major initiative of CEY this year and will be further developed in 2015. The vision of the CEY Board is that these partnerships will see the redevelopment of ministry to young people in a number of parishes right across the Diocese.

### **Concluding Comments**

I am delighted with the professionalism I see in the Diocesan Office under the leadership of our Diocesan Business Manager, Mr John Cleary. John together with Ms Linda Wilson, as the Parish and Administrative Services Manager and Mr David Hartley as the Diocesan Accountant, and their teams serve us very well. I want particularly to thank Alison Dalmazzone and Danielle Veronesi for the support they give.

I thank Bishop Peter for his hardworking, capable and wise leadership during the search for a Diocesan Bishop. Bishop Peter and I have been able to establish a very close working relationship as episcopal colleagues. We

continue to learn where our gifts complement and supplement each other and enjoy modelling in our work together what we want to encourage in others. I have appreciated the supportive and collaborative Bishop's Ministry Team in the office, and the engaging clergy and lay people across the Diocese who are passionate and open to the future.

I am looking for the bishops to spend more time in 2015 in building community connections than has been possible this year. I want us to be able to engage more with the significant justice issues affecting our communities and not bound to the desk with the tyranny of the immediate.

And so my friends, we begin the work of Synod, giving glory to God.

To him who is able to keep us from falling, and to make us stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen. (Jude 1: 24 – 25)

## **Visitors to the Diocese**

*Archbishop Philip Freier and Mrs Joy Freier  
Bishop Godfrey Fryer  
Professor Chris Hall  
The Reverend John Goodwin*

## **Council of Churches of East Asia Members**

### **Hong Kong**

*Archbishop Paul Kwong  
Bishop Andrew Chan  
Reverend Kenneth Lau  
Reverend Kwok, Che Chin*

### **Taiwan**

*Mrs Lin Bi-Huey*

### **Japan**

*Bishop Andrew Yutaka Nakamura and Mrs Michiko Nakamura*

### **Korea**

*Archbishop Paul Kim and Mrs Theresa Ahn Kim  
Bishop Onesimus Dongsin Park  
Mr Jun Kee*

### **Myanmar**

*Archbishop Stephen Than Myint Oo*

### **The Philippines**

*Prime Bishop Malecдан, Edward Pacyaya and Mrs Myrnam Malecдан  
Bishop Dixie Taclobao and Reverend Julieta Lumaguey Taclobao Bishop Harry  
Brent Alawas and Shirley K. Alawas  
Bishop Jonathan Casimina and Mrs Jennifer A. Casimina  
Bishop Danilo Bustamante and Mrs Marilyn Granil Bustamante*

### **Malaysia**

*Archbishop Bolly Lapok and Madam Mary Jean Baba  
Bishop Ng Moon Hing and Ding Siew Lan  
Bishop Selvaraj Thangasamy and Mrs Daphne Rosaline  
Bishop Melter Jiki Bin Tais*

## **United Kingdom**

*Reverend Rachel Clare Carnegie (Anglican Communion Office)*

### ***Appointments, Ordinations, Resignations and Retirements***

#### ***The Anglican Church of Australia***

*The Right Reverend John Ford* was enthroned as the Bishop of the Diocese of the Murray on 6 December 2013.

*The Reverend Chris Edwards* was consecrated as the Bishop of North Sydney on 29 March 2014.

*Archdeacon Cameron Venables* was consecrated as Bishop for the Western Region of Brisbane on Tuesday 24 June 2014.

*The Very Reverend Shenouda Mansour* of the Coptic Orthodox Church has been appointed as General Secretary to the Executive Committee of the NSW Ecumenical Council in June 2014.

*The Reverend Canon Jeremy James* was consecrated as the Assistant Bishop of Perth on 6 August 2014.

*The Reverend Alan Robert Gillion* was ordained as the tenth Bishop of the Riverina on 15 August 2014.

*The Reverend David Robinson* was consecrated as the twelfth Bishop of Rockhampton on Tuesday 2 September 2014.

*The Reverend Canon Garry Dodd* was appointed Part Time Executive Officer at The Australian Council of the Mission to Seafarers (MTS) on 28 July 2014.

*The Reverend Dr Greg Anderson* was elected 6<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Diocese of the Northern Territory to be consecrated on 29 November 2014.

## ***Diocesan Appointments and Moves***

*The Reverend Stephen Powter* was appointed Area Dean of the Central Coast on 9 September 2013.

*The Reverend Bronwyn Marchant* was appointed Rector in the Parish of Wyoming on 24 September 2013.

*The Reverend Janet Killen* was installed into the Stretch Canonry on Sunday 10 November.

*The Reverend Dr Fergus King* was appointed Area Dean of Newcastle on 14 November 2013.

*The Reverend Dr Julia Perry* was appointed Chaplain to Samaritans on 17 November 2013.

*The Reverend Doug Morrison-Cleary* was appointed Priest in Charge of the Parish of Beresfield-Thornton on 2 December 2013.

*The Reverend Selwyn Dornan* was appointed Associate Priest in the Parish of Birmingham Gardens on 1 January 2014.

*The Reverend Jenny Foley* was appointed 0.5 Chaplain at Anglican Care – Storm Village on 5 December 2013 and 0.5 Chaplain at Manning Valley Anglican College on 16 January 2014.

*The Reverend Cameron Freese* was appointed Rector in the Parish of Merewether on 16 December 2013.

*The Reverend Moira Evers* was appointed Priest in Charge of the parish of Telarah and Rutherford on 18 December 2013.

*The Reverend Andrew Mead* was appointed Chaplain to Anglican Care on 5 January 2014.

*The Reverend Rob Llewellyn* was appointed Assistant Curate in the Parish of the Camden Haven in 2 February 2014.

*The Reverend Murray Woolnough* was appointed Rector of St John's Cooks Hill on 28 January 2014.

*The Right Reverend Gregory Thompson* was installed as the Thirteenth Bishop of Newcastle on 2 February 2014.

*The Reverend Bryce Amner* was appointed Priest in Charge of the Parish of Williamtown Medowie and Mallabula on 2 February 2014.

*The Reverend Les Forester* was appointed Intentional Interim Priest at Forster Tuncurry on 2 February 2014.

*The Reverend Julie Turnbull* was appointed Rector in the Parish of Toronto on 24 February 2014.

*The Reverend Michelle Hazel-Jawhary* was appointed Area Dean of the Manning Deanery on 26 February 2014.

*The Reverend Tim Waghorn* was appointed Priest in Charge in the Parish of Lakes Anglican on 3 March 2014.

*The Reverend Michael Davies* was appointed Rector in the Parish of Woy Woy on Monday 10 March 2014.

*The Reverend Roger Zohrab* was appointed Chaplain to John Hunter Hospital on 4 May 2014.

*The Reverend Robyn Pullin* was appointed Acting Chaplain at Bishop Tyrrell Anglican College on 12 May 2014.

*The Reverend Doug Morrison-Cleary* was appointed Area Dean of Maitland on 4 June 2014.

*The Reverend Canon Sonia Roulston* was appointed Acting Archdeacon of Newcastle from 4 June 2014.

*The Reverend Garry Dodd*, was appointed Canon to the Cathedral on 13 July 2014.

*The Reverend Kesh Govan* was appointed Rector of Nelson Bay on 4 August 2014.

*The Reverend Peter Middleton* was appointed Chaplain to the Mission to Seafarers Newcastle on 15 September 2014.

*The Reverend Glen Hughes* was appointed as the Supervising Priest for the Parishes of Merriwa and Murrurundi on 12 October 2014.

*The Reverend Jenny Foley*, was appointed Assistant Curate in the Parish of Singleton on 12 October 2014.

*The Reverend Brian Ford* was appointed Rector to the Parish of Wingham on 13 October 2014.

### ***Ordinations by Bishop Peter Stuart as Administrator***

*The Reverend Jenny Foley* was ordained a Deacon on 24 November 2013.

*The Reverend Rob Llewellyn* was ordained a Deacon on 24 November 2013.

*The Reverend James Innes* was ordained a Deacon on 24 November 2013.

*The Reverend Kenneth Craft* was ordained a Deacon on 24 November 2013.

*The Reverend Judith Walsh* was ordained a Deacon on 24 November 2013.

*The Reverend Kathryn Dunstan* was ordained a Priest on 24 November 2013.

*The Reverend Graham Gordon* was ordained a Priest on 24 November 2013.

*The Reverend Barbara Hayes* was ordained a Priest on 24 November 2013.

*The Reverend Chris Jackson* was ordained a Priest on 24 November 2013.

*The Reverend Jody Zammit* was ordained a Priest on 24 November 2013.

### ***Parish Ministry Teams***

Wingham Parish Ministry Team was commissioned on 8 January 2014.

Bateau Bay Parish Ministry Team was commissioned on 22 June 2014.

Wallsend Parish Ministry Team was commissioned on 2 February 2014.

Belmont Parish Ministry Team was commissioned on 22 July 2014.

### ***Retirements***

*The Reverend Terry Frewin* retired as Chaplain to Anglican Care on 15 March 2014.

*The Reverend John Dring* retired as Chaplain to the John Hunter Hospital on 3 May 2014.

*The Reverend Barry Prinable* retired as Rector of Wingham on 9 May 2014.

*The Reverend Selwyn Dornan* retired as Associate Priest in the Parish of Georgetown on 21 September 2014

*Mr Alan Green* retired as Headmaster of Newcastle Grammar School on 3 September 2014.

### ***Resignations / Departures from the Diocese***

*The Reverend Dr Keith Joseph* resigned as Priest in Charge in the Parish of Mt Vincent Weston on 13 October 2013.

*The Reverend Stewart Perry* resigned as Rector in the Parish of St John's Newcastle and concluded his ministry on 20 October 2013.

*The Reverend Mandy Wheatley* resigned as Priest in Charge of the Parish of Merriwa on Sunday 29 December 2013.

*The Reverend Ian Howarth* resigned as Rector of Toronto Parish on 15 January 2014.

*Mr Bruce Rixon* resigned as Principal of Bishop Tyrrell Anglican College on 21 March 2014.

*The Reverend Andrew Akol* resigned as Assistant Priest of the Parish of MiCA on 11 April 2014.

*The Reverend Stephen Bloor* resigned as Rector of the Parish of Bateau Bay on 15 October 2014.

### ***Arrivals***

*Mrs Sue Williams* was appointed Ministry Development Officer for Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and Central Coast Deaneries on 1 September 2013.

*Mrs Sandra Langford* was appointed Principal of Manning Valley Anglican College on 14 February 2014.

*Mr Peter Oates* was appointed Assistant Chaplain at Lakes Grammar An Anglican School on 14 July 2014.

*Mrs Erica Thomas* was appointed Head of the Newcastle Grammar School on 22 September 2014.

### ***Deconsecrations, Consecrations and Blessings***

St Mary's Church, Greta was deconsecrated on 27 October 2013.

St Thomas' Church Carrington was deconsecrated on 6 July 2014.

St Thomas' Church Ellalong was deconsecrated on 28 September 2014.

### ***Special Anniversaries***

*The Reverend Ken Yapp* celebrated 50 years of Deaconing on 1 December 2013.

*The Reverend Paul Robertson* celebrated 40 years of Priesthood on 15 December 2013.

*The Reverend Terry Frewin* celebrated 40 years of Deaconing on 15 December 2013.

*The Reverend Greg Holmes* celebrated 50 years of Priesthood on 21 December 2013.

*The Reverend Warwick Turvey* celebrated 60 years of Priesthood on 21 December 2013.

*The Very Reverend Stephen Williams* celebrated 40 years of Deaconing on 25 January 2014.

*The Reverend Stephen Moore* celebrated 10 years of Deaconing on 31 January 2014.

*The Reverend Barry Prinable* celebrated 25 years of Deaconing on 4 February 2014.

*The Reverend Chris Butterworth* celebrated 30 years of Deaconing on 4 February 2014.

*The Reverend Glen Pope* celebrated 20 years of Priesthood on 5 February 2014.

*The Reverend Selwyn Dornan* celebrated 20 years of Priesthood on 5 February 2014.

*The Reverend Philip Thirlwell* celebrated 55 years of Priesthood on 24 February 2014.

*The Reverend Peter Davies* celebrated 55 years of Priesthood on 24 February 2014.

## **Awards**

*Ms Maddie Elliott*, Year 10 Student at Bishop Tyrrell Anglican College was awarded an OAM on 26 January 2014 for her contribution to sport and the 2012 Olympics.

*Mrs Margaret Flannery* was awarded an OAM on 26 January 2014 for her contribution to Local Government and to the community of Dungog.

*The Hon John Price AM* was awarded an Honorary Degree – Doctor of Letters by the University of Newcastle on 2 October 2014.

## ***In Memoriam***

Among the faithful departed, we make special mention of:

*The Reverend Christopher Pullin*, Archdeacon Stephen Pullin's brother died on 15 October 2013.

*Mrs Marie Robinson*, wife of the Right Reverend Donald Robinson died on 7 January 2014.

*Bishop John Vockler* died on 6 February 2014.

*Mrs Dell Judith Cornish Grindrod*, wife of the late Bishop Vernon Cornish died on 23 February 2014.

*Mrs Peggy Heywood*, wife of the late Bishop Oliver Heywood (Diocese of Bendigo 1975-1991) died at the beginning of April 2014.

*Deaconess Margaret Rodgers AM* died Saturday 31 May 2014.

*Bishop John McIntyre* died on 6 June 2014.

*The Reverend Peter Davies* died on 9 June 2014.

*The Reverend Walter (Wally) Jarvis* died on 30 June 2014.

*Mrs Ann Shevill*, wife of the late Bishop Shevill died on 26 August 2014.

*Mrs Kay Miller*, wife of The Reverend Kim Miller died on 4 September 2014.

*Bishop Ken Short* died on 19 October 2014.

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- <sup>i</sup> Mason “Towards Positions of Safe Uncertainty” from *Human Systems: The Journal of Systemic Consultation and Management* Vol4 1993 p189-200
- <sup>ii</sup> Chilton Knusden in Nancy Hopkins & Mark Laaser (ed) *Restoring the Soul of a Church – Healing Congregations wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct* p 75 ff
- <sup>iii</sup> Kevin McDonough in Nancy Hopkins & Mark Laaser (ed) *Restoring the Soul of a Church – Healing Congregations wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct*
- <sup>iv</sup> Geoffrey Robinson *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church – Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*
- <sup>v</sup> Anson Shupe *Wolves within the Fold – Religious Leadership and Abuses of Power*
- <sup>vi</sup> Karen McClintock *Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations*
- <sup>vii</sup> Behavioural Covenants in Congregations, Gilbert R. Rendle
- <sup>viii</sup> <http://www.thinkers.sa.gov.au/seligmanreport/>
- <sup>ix</sup> Charles Manz, Kim Cameron, Karen Manz and Robert Marx in *The Virtuous Organisation: an Introduction* ([www.worldscientific.com](http://www.worldscientific.com))

[www.newcastleanglican.org.au](http://www.newcastleanglican.org.au)

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## Special Ad Clerum – to the Clergy

Bishop Greg Thompson

Anglican Diocese of Newcastle

[www.newcastle.org.au](http://www.newcastle.org.au)

October 2014

### ENHANCING OUR COMMON LIFE AND COMMON PRAYER

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

It has been really great since arriving in February to explore with you in a whole range of conversations the momentum of mission and ministry in the Diocese. I want to affirm the enthusiasm I have witnessed.

I can see that the vision of becoming Ministering Communities in Mission stimulated many parishes to reflect on their life, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and embrace creative change. My desire is that we build on these strong foundations.

In the letter that follows I am outlining some of the markers of ministry and announcing some appointments. I wanted you to have this information to shape your thinking as we come together as a Diocesan family at Synod. I encourage you to share this letter with your parish councils and work through the material with them.

#### **A variety of parish structures**

I have learnt that there are at least four forms of missional leadership and governance in place in the Diocese –

- Parishes organised in the traditional form of an Incumbent and Parish Council
- Parishes with a resourcing team and a ministry team with members each having a portfolio
- Parishes with a resourcing team, a ministry team with members working on key mission projects and clergy in local ministry and authorised lay ministers undertaking ministry without necessarily being on the ministry team
- Parishes with other structures because they are new or have been struggling.

#### **The Bishop –**

- ✓ affirms a variety of parish structures for missional leadership and governance
- ✓ is making the calling, nurturing and sustaining of clergy in local ministry a priority
- ✓ is opening up pathways for 'mature entry' ordination candidates
- ✓ is integrating clergy education for stipendiary and local ministry
- ✓ creating regional archdeacons to resource and support the parishes
- ✓ wants every parish to have a Mission Plan which is reflected in the budget and planned giving by the beginning of 2016
- ✓ wants every key lay leaders to have done theological study and have done or do two special diocesan units in Contextual/Situational Analysis and Mission in the Diocese

There is great flexibility in this structure to empower laity, enable change, to nurture growth and promote creative local responses supported by the Bishop and Diocesan Council. It is vital that every parish has the right collaborative structure in place for the season of work it is in.

### **Clergy in local ministry**

I recognise the important contribution made by clergy serving in local ministry. I will be looking to parishes, schools and agencies to foster vocations in this area. Ideally, the clergy serving in local ministry would work closely with a team but, as has already been found, this cannot always be the case. I have made the calling, nurturing and sustaining of clergy in local ministry a priority for the bishops in their ministry.

### **Formation for ordained ministry**

The vocation to stipendiary ministry remains an integral part of our work. We are blessed with people of all ages expressing a desire to serve God and his people. I am putting in place a training programme that recognises the particular needs and contribution of those who have the opportunity to explore their vocation later in life.

The University of Newcastle have advised us that they are “resting” the degree of Bachelor of Theology in 2015 as they examine its future. Following careful consultation, we are now looking to direct students to Trinity College in Melbourne and the University of Divinity for their academic studies.

I have asked for a greater integration of the formation of clergy for local ministry and stipendiary ministry. I have also asked for the formation to prepare people intentionally for chaplaincy and pioneering ministries as well as parish ministry. Bishop Peter will oversee this development. The role of Diocesan Director of Ordinands and Executive Officer of the Newcastle School of Theology for Ministry will be split into two roles. Mrs Sue Williams will become the Diocesan Director of Vocations and the Reverend Canon Katherine Bowyer will become the Diocesan Director of Formation while remaining the Rector of Cardiff.

#### **Appointments for Clergy Education and Formation for 2015**

- Mrs Sue Williams – Diocesan Director of Vocations
- The Rev'd Canon Katherine Bowyer – Diocesan Director of Formation

### **Archdeacons**

As I have been indicating in the regional consultations, my aim is to have a person working part-time in each region to resource and support the parishes, through the incumbent, in envisioning ministry, making mission plans, trying new things and reviewing the experience. I want this person to promote partnership with local Anglican agencies and schools. I have decided to call these people Archdeacons. The Diocesan Council has adopted legislation that will mean that not all archdeacons will sit on the Diocesan Council. I am wanting the Archdeacons to serve the clergy and parishes as a ministry of coach, mentor and guide.

#### **Archdeacon Appointments –**

- The Rev'd Rod Bower – Central Coast
- The Rev'd Les Forester – Paterson and the Manning
- The Rev'd Canon David Battrick – Maitland
- The Rev'd Wendy Dubjoski – Lake Macquarie
- The Rev'd Charlie Murry – Upper Hunter
- Archdeacon Arthur Copeman as the Archdeacon for Ministry Support will undertake key support for the City of Newcastle
- Archdeacon Sonia Roulston as the Diocesan Archdeacon will be the senior Archdeacon.

At the Synod service I will be collating the new Archdeacons. I am pleased to announce that they will be the Reverend Les Forester who will be the Archdeacon for Paterson and the Manning with some continuing MDO responsibilities in Maitland. The Reverend Rod Bower will be Archdeacon for the Central Coast. The Reverend Canon David Battrick will be the Archdeacon for Maitland. The Reverend Charlie Murry will be the Archdeacon for the Upper Hunter. The Reverend Wendy Dubjoski will be the Archdeacon for Lake Macquarie. Archdeacon Arthur Copeman will exercise this role to Newcastle City. Archdeacon Sonia Roulston in her role as Diocesan Archdeacon will be the senior archdeacon. All of these decisions have been made recognising that Archdeacon Stephen Pullin remains on sick leave and when he returns we will need to review the allocation of responsibilities.

#### **Developing Parishes**

It was stressed at the regional consultations that the incumbents of the parishes have the call and responsibility to provide leadership for creative and visionary ministry. Like many, I have been encouraged by the work in the Church of England on Mission Action Plans. It is becoming more and more evident that where parishes plan their mission systematically growth, in its various domains, is possible. The responsibility for planning must be with the local parish – the incumbent, other clergy, lay leaders and people working together. I have an expectation that by the beginning of 2016 every parish will have a Mission Plan which is reflected in its budget and part of its planned giving. I want the bishops, the archdeacons and the diocesan office to be a support to this planning.

#### **Lay Education and Formation**

The work of ministry and mission in parishes will be strengthened by the people of God engaging in ongoing theological and biblical study as well as developing ministry skills. I am asking the regional archdeacons to work with their region to identify the best ways of encouraging theological study and the development of ministry skills. It is important that every member of the church has the opportunity to live into their baptism by being helped to identify their God given gifts and use them in Christian ministry and mission. I want to know that in each region or the parishes of that region there are options for learning more especially about the bible. I want to know that our people receive encouragement and support through training for the ministries they are doing.

I have been impressed by the focus on contextual analysis and mission in the certificate and diploma delivered by the Newcastle School of Theology for Ministry. I am conscious of the demands on an education body in preparing, reviewing and updating learning material. I think the season for NSTM creating learning materials has largely come to an end. We can celebrate this vital contribution to change in the Diocese.

When it comes to authorising lay people for ministries such as preaching, I want to know that they have undertaken an appropriate course of study. I imagine that we will see much greater use of the certificate delivered through Trinity College, Melbourne. I would like lay people

receiving the Bishop's licence to have done two diocesan 'units' in *Contextual/situational Analysis* and *Mission in the Diocese*. I will be asking NSTM to find ways that these can be delivered locally. As a general rule, each person in a ministry team should be exploring these units if they haven't already done so.

### **Concluding comments**

I am delighted with the professionalism I see in the Diocesan Office under the leadership of our Diocesan Business Manager, Mr John Cleary. John together with Ms Linda Wilson, as the Parish and Administrative Services Manager and Mr David Hartley as the Diocesan Accountant, and their teams serve us very well.

Bishop Peter and I have been able to establish a very close working relationship as episcopal colleagues together sharing the work of diocesan leadership in ensuring "that the bases are covered" but also ensuring that we are able to focus on some key priorities. We continue to learn where our gifts complement and supplement each other and enjoy modelling in our work together what we want to encourage in others.

I am looking for the bishops to spend more time in 2015 in building community connections than has been possible this year. I want us to be able to engage more with the significant justice issues affecting our communities and not bound to the desk with the tyranny of the immediate.

I am conscious that we have some way to go with the enquiries and investigations of the Royal Commission and the NSW Police. These matters will continue to make demands on all areas of the diocesan leadership.

With every blessing for you in your ministries

**Bishop Gregory Thompson**  
**The Bishop of Newcastle**