

**THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA  
DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE**

**Third Session of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Synod**



**Address from the President**

**The Rt Rev Dr Peter Stuart**

**14<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Newcastle**

**25 October 2019**

## **Welcome**

Friends in Christ,

It is my privilege to welcome you to this session of our Diocesan Synod. Once again, we thank the Dean and the Cathedral community for welcoming us here. We recognise that this place is significant to the Diocese and to the City. We know the Cathedral as the spiritual home for many including the congregations who gather here. With deep lament, we also recognise that the Cathedral and its environs has been a place where harm was done to some. Today, we acknowledge them and affirm our sincere apology to them.

We gather on the land of the Awabakal people. We come to Mulubina – the place of the sea ferns - Newcastle. We celebrate that people walked this land for thousands of years before the English arrived. On your behalf, I acknowledge the Awabakal custodianship of the land and I pay my respects to all aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present and affirm the emerging elders. Knowing that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, I honour elders past.

The Awabakal nation carries a rich sense of the Divine naming that presence Koun - the one who walked like man and flew like an Eagle. Within the Dreaming and continued tradition there is a profound sense of sacredness.

The land from which I come carries a more recent history of knowing thin places in which heaven and earth are felt to be near to each other. My origins are from the land of Aidan, Cuthbert and Oswald – heroes of Celtic Christianity.

We come as people called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to worship and serve God who we know as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. My prayer is that as we meet in Synod, we will all know ourselves to be enveloped within the life of God; that we will know God's love and flourish by God's grace.

## **Gratitude**

I continue to be very grateful to God and to you for the amazing privilege of being the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle. Since coming to you as a bishop in 2009 I have been extended in many ways. That journey continues in my ministry as the Diocesan Bishop. I have continued to learn and grow through the many opportunities that ministry of this kind enables.

I am grateful that the Diocese, as part of the nurture of the bishops, provides for regular study leave. I was able to participate in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land

through St George's College Jerusalem at the beginning of September. There were many aspects of that time which have rested with me. One of them was seeing the two oldest records of scripture, silver amulets, in the Israel Museum, on which are written the Aaronic blessing from Numbers 6: 24 – 26. For over 3 thousand years these words have been spoken,

May Adonai bless you and keep you.

May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.

May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.

Rabbi Yoel H. Kahn writes,

In blessing, we concretize both what we yearn for and often may not have the place to speak, and we affirm our deepest links and connections between one another and with the Source of All<sup>1</sup>. ...

He quotes Vaclav Havel

The performative speech of blessing, I have come to believe, "is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons."<sup>2</sup>

I am personally thankful for the team of people who surround me. We are blessed by the ministries of Bishop Charlie, Bishop Sonia, Archdeacon Copeman, Archdeacon Bower and Dean Bowyer. On an almost daily basis I interact with Ms Cathy Rose and the Professional Standards Team, Ms Linda Wilson and Mr Glen Cousins and their teams. Ms Alison Dalmazzone keeps the bishops organised in what seems an effortless manner. Both Alison and Ms Jemma Hore offer outstanding executive assistance to the Diocesan Office leadership.

I am moved deeply and often as I think of you all. God has acted to create and redeem the cosmos through Jesus Christ. Our response to God is to offer worship, to learn about God and to engage in God's mission. Each of you, together with the people you represent, play a pivotal part in that work. Thank you for the rich and varied expressions of your ministries.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://reformjudaism.org/what-blessing>

<sup>2</sup> "Hope," Vaclav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace* [New York: Knopf, 1990] p. 181

## **Impact of child sexual abuse**

Our society and our church are more aware than ever before of the life-long impact of abuse on children. Survivors show enormous courage and bravery when they speak of their experience.

We know the importance of ensuring that our institutions are safe places for all people. The Diocesan Council has reported on this Diocese's progress in implementing its response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Diocese is part of the National Redress Scheme and continues to make Redress payments under the Diocese's *Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme* as well as in mediated settlements.

We have established a Board to undertake key redress functions on behalf of the Diocese. It engaged *Finity* Actuaries to help it get a better understanding of the potential liability facing the Diocese in relation to Parishes and Diocesan bodies which have ceased to operate. The actuaries looked at the data we have available together with data from the Royal Commission and other institutional bodies working with children.

Looking forward *Finity* have presented scenarios which outline a potential future liability ranging from \$15.7 million to \$32.2 million over the next two decades. Our actuaries reminded us of the provisional nature to the data because the experience of each institution is different. Our forward planning is based around projected liabilities of \$21 million over 20 years with planning also underway if the responsibility for redress is higher than projected.

The Board and its actuaries have never lost sight of the reality that each journey of redress represents an individual who should never have been exposed to harm. They understand our commitment to redress. The responsibility to make redress is a significant part of our mission.

## **Episcopal Ministry in NSW**

The Anglican Church in NSW has this year welcomed Bishop Mark Short to Canberra-Goulburn and Bishop Donald Kirk to Riverina. It will welcome Bishop-elect Mark Calder to Bathurst in a few weeks' time.

By the time this Synod next meets, Archbishop Glenn Davies will have retired as Metropolitan of New South Wales and his successor will have been installed. When I drafted this address at the beginning of September I wrote,

The increased rapport among the bishops of New South Wales is a result of Glenn's leadership. He has guided us in staying in the difficult conversations as fellow disciples.

Archbishop Davies comments to his own Synod, just over a week ago, did not reflect the rapport that he has created among the NSW bishops. He and I have spoken frankly with each other in the last few days. I have previously invited the Archbishop to the Diocese before he retires. I affirmed my invitation to him, and he intends to be amongst us.

My hope is that, as Australian bishops, we can embrace the invitation of the evangelical scholar, Professor Allen D. Verhey of Hope College<sup>3</sup>. Professor Verhey states,

Let the community gathered for discernment around the whole of scripture include those whom it is too much our impulse to shun.

He invites a community of discernment which exists

to hear and to tell the old, old story, to hear it now and then from saints and now and then from strangers for whom Christ also died.

He promotes a community where,

reading scripture with those whose experience is different from one's own and whose experience of the authority of scripture is different from one's own. In that dialogue, people must listen to scripture and to each, other, muting neither scripture nor each other. We may learn in such discourse with saints and strangers that our reading of scripture does not yet "fit" scripture itself and that our lives and our communities do not yet "fit" the story we love to tell and long to live. Then, discernment is joined to discipline again, and the recognition of a more fitting way to tell the story and to live it prepares the way for humble submission and discipleship. In that communal discernment and mutual discipline, the authority of scripture is experienced again and anew.

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<sup>3</sup> The Holy Bible and Sanctified Sexuality - An Evangelical Approach to Scripture and Sexual Ethics

## Synod

In some ways Synod is meant to be a community of discernment. As the Anglican Church took root in this land, its leaders grew in an understanding that it would need its own ways of decision-making. The existing English patterns would be insufficient. So, Synods were born with the express intent of giving voice to the laity as well as the clergy.

The shape of the Synods differs in each state. Here in NSW it is a meeting of the clergy and the laity with the Diocesan Bishop. The Diocesan Bishop is not a member of the Synod but chairs the Synod. Synod is a place where we speak with each other.

In our NSW way, no major decision can have effect without the Synod and the Bishop agreeing with each other. That agreement is reached through a parliamentary process resulting in an ordinance. Within a few decades, people realised that a lot of ordinances might be needed and so the Synod can, and has, delegated significant aspects of decision-making to the Diocesan Council. Again, the Bishop has a separate and distinct voice.

This sense of meeting together about our shared life with a common purpose is an essential feature of our Anglican way. Sometimes the decisions are easy and routine. Other times the decisions are complex; taking much discussion over years.

In the 1970s, Australian Synods grappled with the best way of responding to a person who had been divorced and wished to marry again with the blessing of God expressed through the church. From the 1980s through to the early 2000s, Australian Synods explored the ministry of women as deacons, priests and bishops. Since the late 1990s, Australian Synods have been called to reflect on the church's engagement with LGBTIQ+ Christians. Our Synod has before it business which will reflect on our engagement with LGBTIQ+ Christians.

The Anglican Church of Australia is different to most other provinces of the Anglican Communion. In those places, where a General Synod makes a determination affecting the order and government of a Diocese, it is binding on the Diocese. In Australia, no decision affecting diocesan life can be resolved without the agreement of the Synod and the Bishop of the Diocese. Some decisions can only be made once a General Synod has cleared the path while other decisions are entirely within the remit of the Diocese, within the boundaries of the constitution. For example, each of the Dioceses of Sydney, Newcastle and Grafton have different ways of responding to requests for marriages outside church buildings and for the marriage of divorced persons.

There are many variations between dioceses; some of which are routine and some of which give expression to the deep values held by the people of a Diocese.

It is an important ministry to be a member of the Synod. Synod members devote themselves to significant business in these two days. Our ways of decision-making can seem to be very wordy and cumbersome. At their heart is an expectation that we will listen carefully to each other as we also listen to God. It is my intention to listen closely to the debates and to discern more deeply the views held within this part of the Anglican family.

Central to our Anglican way is the responsibility to listen to God. We are not simply a not-for-profit organisation or a community business. We are not simply a company of people bound together for a common purpose. We are an expression of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. We are the people of the resurrection; the Body of Christ.

In my address this year, I want to focus on our vocation to listen to God and our desire to respond to God's call. I want to reflect on our call to contemplative action.

### **Contemplation – Stillness**

As we continue this journey, I invite you to join with me in singing the hymn – “Be Still for the Presence of the Lord; the Holy One is here.”

*Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here;  
Come bow before him now  
with reverence and fear:  
In him no sin is found –  
we stand on holy ground.  
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,  
the Holy One, is here.*

*Be still, for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place;  
He comes to cleanse and heal,  
to minister his grace -  
No work too hard for him.  
In faith receive from him.  
Be still, for the power of the Lord  
is moving in this place.*

*David J. Evans (b. 1957)*

*Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around;  
He burns with holy fire,  
with splendour he is crowned:  
How awesome is the sight –  
our radiant King of light!  
Be still, for the glory of the Lord  
is shining all around.*

Just over two years ago we took the step to change the ministry week for clergy from an official 6-day 48-hour week to a 5-day 40-hour week. Our thinking was influenced by concerns about clergy wellbeing and our desire to affirm the multiple vocations clergy have as family members, friends, community members along with the call to be deacon, priest or bishop.

It is still something of a journey, but we are seeing clergy have more time for reflection and thinking. Unsurprisingly, members of the clergy are reporting a greater sense of creativity and productivity. This is reflected in some wonderful green-shoots of new or renewed work. We hear of the blessing for those in ministry of being able to spend more time with elderly relatives or their children.

Two years ago, we recognised that there was a great risk that our clergy had lost the sabbath sense. With the increased busyness of our age, the ministry day had become more concentrated. The one day off was focussed on 'at home' chores. The rhythm of recreative rest was being lost.

Our aboriginal and Celtic friends would both affirm that an essential part of being human is to take time to be at one with creation and through that find ways of being at one with the Divine, to know ourselves as part of a wider, sacred story. Our life and our decision-making will be impaired if we don't take that time. The vocation of stillness – is to embrace way of restraint through which we become receptive to God, humanity and creation.

I suspect that if you reflect on your life and the ways of your church community you may recognise that there is less stillness than there could be. At our celebrations of the Eucharist there is often a lot of movement. Here in Synod there will be lots of hustle and bustle. Our parish diaries and parish council agendas are very busy.

I recognise that I don't easily represent a figure of stillness. In response to the demands of my role I know that I can be and can come over as busy or preoccupied. So, as I speak to myself, and as I speak to you, I wonder what greater stillness might look like. And, this is stillness with a purpose – to become more attentive to the life of God as well as the life of the world; its people, creatures and flora.

Recently I learnt more about the Slow Church movement. It describes itself this way –

Slow Church is inspired by the language and philosophy of the Slow Food and other Slow movements to rethink the ways in which we share life together in our church communities. It encourages churches to examine the ways in which we've reflexively embraced a culture of unreflective speed, dehumanising efficiency, and dis-integrating isolationism. More importantly, it paints a picture of the more holistic, interconnected and abundant life together that we believe people have been called to in Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, offers some gems of the sabbath that speak to a journey of stillness. He writes, "Shabbat is where a restless people rested and renewed itself", "Shabbat is the day when we stand still and let our blessings catch up with us", "Shabbat is Judaism's stillness at the heart of a turning world."<sup>5</sup>

In an era of ever-increasing communication and the influx of artificial intelligence powered by mind blowing algorithms, we are invited to live in a different way. To embrace regularly times of stillness and reflection through which we are attuned again to the movement and wishes of God.

I think that the being still will breathe many things into our shared life. I wonder especially if we take more time to be still whether we will sense more deeply the groans of the Spirit amidst creation; whether we will hear the cries of Earth amidst the pollution of the air and water. I am confident that the vocation to stillness will draw out of all of us a deeper sense of common humanity and environmental responsibility grounded in our relationship with God.

Let us be still for a few moments before God.

## **Contemplation – Solitude**

I want to move from reflecting on the practice of stillness to consider the practice of solitude. When I think of this practice I am drawn to the evocative image of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Matthew tells us how Jesus took with Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. He describes the anguish that came over Jesus. He asked his close companions to stay and keep watch as he went off alone. He returned three times, each time finding them asleep. We are given powerful images of deep wrestling of the soul as Jesus prepares for the cross. The work in this time was a solitary work even though others were nearby.

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<sup>4</sup> slowchurch.com

<sup>5</sup> Sacks, Jonathan (2000) Radical Then, Radical Now: Exploring the Legacy of the World's Oldest Religion

Another evocative image of solitude comes from the Old Testament. In Genesis 32, we hear how Jacob is preparing for a meeting with Esau. There was enmity between them. Jacob and his household come near to a river and when they have settled for the night he goes off alone. Then we learn that he wrestles with a man until dawn – a fierce battle that leaves him permanently maimed. In a brief conversation he realises that this has been no ordinary fight – he was been wrestling with God.

I invite you to sing the hymn “The Servant King”

<p><i>From heaven you came helpless babe Entered our world, your glory veiled Not to be served but to serve And give Your life that we might live</i></p> <p><i>R: This is our God, The Servant King He calls us now to follow Him To bring our lives as a daily offering Of worship to The Servant King</i></p> <p><i>There in the garden of tears My heavy load he chose to bear His heart with sorrow was torn 'Yet not My will but Yours,' He said R:</i></p>	<p><i>Come see His hands and His feet The scars that speak of sacrifice Hands that flung stars into space To cruel nails surrendered R: So let us learn how to serve And in our lives enthrone Him Each other's needs to prefer For it is Christ we're serving R:</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Graham Kendrick b 1950</i></p>
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Within Judaism and Christianity, as well as other world religions, there is an understanding of the need to have time away from the maddening crown; to be alone. Sometimes these periods of solitude are for refreshment but more often than we realise solitude is a time for profound reflection. Solitude is a space to encounter God and come away different.

Henri Nouwen talks about solitude in this way –

Solitude is not a private therapeutic place. Rather, it is the place of conversion, the place where the old self dies and the new self is born...

In solitude I get rid of my scaffolding: no friends to talk with, no telephone calls to make, no meetings to attend, no music to entertain, no books to distract, just me – naked, vulnerable, weak, sinful, deprived, broken – nothing. It is this nothingness that I have to face in my solitude, a nothingness so dreadful that everything in me wants to run to my friends, my work, and my distractions so that I can forget my nothingness and make myself believe that I am worth something.

But that is not all. As soon as I decide to stay in my solitude, confusing ideas, disturbing images, wild fantasies, and weird associations jump about in my mind like monkeys in a banana tree. Anger and greed begin to show their ugly faces. I give long, hostile speeches to my enemies and dream lustful dreams in which I am wealthy, influential, and very attractive – or poor, ugly, and in need of immediate consolation. Thus I try again to run from the dark abyss of my nothingness and restore my false self in all its vainglory...

The wisdom of the desert is that the confrontation with our own frightening nothingness forces us to surrender ourselves totally and unconditionally to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup>

As a Diocese we have had an experience of solitude – we have been removed from or called to step away from the position we once held. We have been required to stop and reflect. A whole range of associations fell away, and we were forced to look at ourselves. One of the things we have discovered is that this is an ongoing journey. The survivors of abuse and their supporters moved us to a place where we would look at ourselves more honestly; a place where we might wrestle with God. We are learning afresh that the status and privilege we had assumed needs to be replaced with humility and transparency.

The Royal Commission, as stressed to us last year by Mr Robert Fitzgerald, called on us to address our culture. Corporate culture is made up of the behaviours and attitudes of the people who make up the organisation. It is more than the sum total of what individuals think and do. What people believe and how they act have a cumulative effect.

In August, I shared with the clergy, and then with the Diocese, a simple tool for talking about behaviour. Drawing on the code *Being Together* it identified practices where we were compliant with shared expectations, practices which required remedial action, and approaches to creative action. The tool identified concerning or corrosive behaviour as “below the line” and creative or welcome

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<sup>6</sup> Nouwen, Henri *The Way of the Heart*, p. 27-28.

behaviour as “above the line.” It is built on the premise that we can quickly and easily address with one another much of the “below the line behaviour” before it escalates. We can just as easily affirm creative or “above the line behaviour”, yet we are not set up formally or informally to do this.

Above the line, creative, behaviour in our Diocese looks like clergy and laity –

- finding innovative ways of enabling and encouraging people in their ministry area and their colleagues to fulfil their vocation and calling.
- preferencing the wellbeing of people over other demands or expectations
- finding new ways of participating in and encouraging others to participate in church life.
- openly reflecting with their leaders, peers and immediate team about the impact of their behaviour on others
- exercising leadership that affirms Christ’s welcome to all people.
- developing and implementing processes that enhance transparency, integrity and honesty in their ministry setting
- working to enhance positive and transparent communication (written, visual and verbal) aimed at strengthening and encouraging others.
- being proactive in including people who we experience as different
- establishing and promoting respectful opportunities to listen to and understand people’s different perspectives
- initiating processes to resolve conflict and help others resolve conflict.
- imagining and implementing practices that enhance a safe church environment and individual safety focussing on the needs of the child or vulnerable person

We faced God and we faced ourselves in the solitude. We knew that we must make change. We can assure the community that we are committed to people’s safety and wellbeing by our disposition and by our actions. The community wants us to succeed and make a difference. It continues to show us tremendous goodwill.

In a few weeks time, a number of clergy and lay people will be meeting with representatives of one of the aboriginal nations in our Diocese. Just before that all of the clergy will be engaged in cultural awareness training as part of clergy professional development.

I raise this because as we address culture, I believe we are being called to address the beliefs and practices in church and community life which frustrate the voice and contribution of aboriginal people. We do not engage in vibrant storytelling which allows us to honour the people on whose land we now undertake ministry. We have not been confronted by their experiences nor acknowledge the role that Anglicans played in dispossession. I feel we have been offered a Xairos moment of healing for white and aboriginal people. There can be no doubt that as we listen deeply to experiences of the aboriginal nations we are going to be confronted by the ravages of colonisation and the way that harm continues to be done today.

I want to explore the metaphor of wrestling a little further for our church is engaged in a holy wrestle at this time and we will experience it within the Synod. Faithful Christians within the church who recognise the authority of Holy Scripture do not have a consensus view on how LGBTIQ+ people, especially LGBTIQ+ Christians, are to be engaged, embraced and supported. Following this address, Bishop Stephen Pickard is going to help us further with this conversation.

I will watch and chair the conversation with some anxiety. I am no different to anyone in the room in that I have thought about my position from a theological, biblical, and pastoral perspective. I continue to study, reflect and pray. As Diocesan Bishop, I hold all of you in great esteem and long that our conversation will be gracious and generous.

Nobody can predict the outcome of any of the Synod votes and much will be said about whatever we decide. To be a Diocese that affirms comprehensive Anglicanism means that we are willing to live with the fact that there are people with whom we disagree. The complex question centres on which perspective should dominate what occurs in diocesan life and how we will respond graciously to conscientious difference.

I am very conscious of the harm that has been done by the church to LGBTIQ+ people and those who love them. Our conversations have often come over as demeaning. In each LGBTIQ+ person, as in all people, we see the image of God – God bearing himself to us. That simple fact should shape our discourse.

I had hoped that a Diocesan Faith and Order Commission would have enabled us to develop a Newcastle Anglican perspective on complex questions. It was one of my dreams that hasn't come to fruition. We will find other ways of ensuring

that we are well resourced for the many theological conversations we should be engaged in.

Solitude is a holy practice of deep listening. The discipline of solitude is about moving into this sacred territory in order that we might listen well. With profound vulnerability we open ourselves to affirmation and confrontation. We meet with God who makes himself known in the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely, the ill, and the prisoner. We meet with God in unexpected places.

Despite being physically close to others, I invite you in your heart and mind to move to a quiet place; to a sacred place. Know yourself to be with God and be open that God might respond.

### **Contemplation – Silence**

I want now to reflect on silence. In the Book of Genesis, we are invited to imagine that at the dawn of creation the Spirit moved across the face of the deep prior to life coming into being. We are in awe of the Spirit as she moves. One way of reading this passage is to imagine amazing silence as she travels. In 1 Kings 19 as Elijah is on the mountain feeling desperately lonely and afraid, following a great battle with people who thought differently, he is invited to wait on the voice of God. It doesn't occur in the strong and mighty. As we know, God makes himself known in the "still small voice". Quietness and silence are often spaces in which profound encounter occurs.

I invite you to join in singing the hymn "Dear Lord and Father of humankind"

*Dear Lord and Father of humankind,  
forgive our foolish ways;  
re-clothe us in our rightful mind,  
in purer lives thy service find,  
in deeper reverence praise.*

*Drop thy still dews of quietness,  
till all our strivings cease;  
take from our souls the strain and stress,  
and let our ordered lives confess  
the beauty of thy peace.*

*In simple trust like theirs who heard,  
beside the Syrian sea,  
the gracious calling of the Lord,  
let us, like them, without a word  
rise up and follow thee.*

*Breathe through the heats of our desire  
thy coolness and thy balm;  
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;  
speak through the earthquake, wind, and  
fire,  
O still small voice of calm.*

*O Sabbath rest by Galilee!  
O calm of hills above,  
where Jesus knelt to share with thee  
the silence of eternity,  
interpreted by love!*

*John Greenleaf Whittier 1807-1892*

We live with a cacophony of sound. We need never be without a voice on radio or podcast; never without a trace of music; never without a form of communication. On every hour of the day we can hear news or be made aware of a person's view. Television is streamed to us all the time.

An alternative way of life involves pursuing silence. But, not silence for silence sake. We seek to move through silence into the life and rhythm of God.

Many people are familiar with discipline of silence on a retreat where the community moves into silence on the first day and remains quiet until the last day. Those who know something about religious communities will know that many have the practice of greater silence from evening until morning; their silence being broken by words of praise and prayer.

The Rule of the Taize Community comments on silence in this way,

Maintain inner silence in all things so as to dwell in Christ - Inner silence requires first the forgetting of self, so as to quieten conflicting voices and master obsessive anxiety, constantly beginning again as a person who is never discouraged because always forgiven. It makes possible our conversation with Jesus Christ. But who is not daunted by this silence, preferring to be distracted when it is time for work, fleeing prayer to wear themselves out at useless tasks forgetful of their neighbour and themselves?"

Bishop Rowan Williams, when he was the Archbishop of Canterbury, addressed the Catholic Synod of Bishops in 2012. His words offer insights to us know -

To be contemplative as Christ is contemplative is to be open to all the fullness that the Father wishes to pour into our hearts. With our minds made still and ready to receive, with our self-generated fantasies about God and ourselves reduced to silence, we are at last at the point where we may begin to grow.

And we seek this not because we are in search of some private 'religious experience' that will make us feel secure or holy. We seek it because in this self-forgetting gazing towards the light of God in Christ we learn how to look at one another and at the whole of God's creation. In the early Church, there was a clear understanding that we needed to advance from the self-understanding or self-contemplation that taught us to discipline our greedy instincts and cravings to the 'natural contemplation' that perceived and venerated the wisdom of God in the order of the world and allowed us to see created reality for what it truly

was in the sight of God – rather than what it was in terms of how we might use it or dominate it. And from there grace would lead us forward into true ‘theology’, the silent gazing upon God that is the goal of all our discipleship.

In this perspective, contemplation is very far from being just one kind of thing that Christians do: it is the key to prayer, liturgy, art and ethics, the key to the essence of a renewed humanity that is capable of seeing the world and other subjects in the world with freedom – freedom from self-oriented, acquisitive habits and the distorted understanding that comes from them. To put it boldly, contemplation is the only ultimate answer to the unreal and insane world that our financial systems and our advertising culture and our chaotic and unexamined emotions encourage us to inhabit. To learn contemplative practice is to learn what we need so as to live truthfully and honestly and lovingly. It is a deeply revolutionary matter.

One of the reasons to be silent is to listen. How often do you find yourself listening with a view to what you will say next? Whenever we are forming our next sentence in our mind, we are only half paying attention to the one who is speaking.

There is so much in the Christian tradition that points us to the practice of silence. We learn of it from the Desert Fathers and Mothers. We are taken to it by the Mystics. Yet, so much of church life is noisy. Our liturgical spaces can be noisy. Our prayer times can be noisy. Our meetings can be noisy.

The poet Gunilla Norris writes,

Silence brings us back to basics, to our senses, to our selves. It locates us. Without that return we can go so far away from our true natures that we end up, quite literally, beside ourselves. We live blindly and act thoughtlessly. We endanger the delicate balance which sustains our lives, our communities, and our planet.

As we contemplate the life of the church in this Diocese, let us be silent for a few moments – to move beyond hearing ourselves and become aware of God.

## From contemplation to action.

Phileena Heuertz suggests that, "In solitude, we learn to be present. In silence, we learn to listen. And in stillness we develop restraint."<sup>7</sup>

When I shared with one colleague that I was going to focus this year on contemplation – silence, stillness and solitude she quipped “an introverts paradise”. She spoke as an extrovert.

I don't want this address to be seen as a journey towards introspection or passivity. Rather, deep contemplation is the basis for rich gospel proclamation and holy action in which we live out the counter-cultural teachings of Jesus. Action that

- sees, loves and serves Christ in the poor and oppressed,
- challenges the church when it becomes stale and institutionalised,
- is ready to be with another person in their suffering,
- envisions and works for communities and nations in which there is justice, mercy and peace<sup>8</sup>

It has become very clear to me is that the journey of contemplative action is shared by people of much faith, little faith and no faith. In a society where there are many people who say they are spiritual but not religious – the practices of contemplation and justice making create a common ground.

I think that one of the things we need to do as Christians in this common ground is to be more generous in our conversation. To live patiently with people as they explore their value, ethics, and beliefs.

In a world where there is so much spiritual searching so many Christians have become more rigid in expressing their doctrine and expectations. Rachel Held Evans put it this way, “One of the most destructive mistakes we Christians make is to prioritise shared beliefs over shared relationship, which is deeply ironic considering we worship a God who would rather die than lose relationship with us.”

In the course of life many people will encounter situations or circumstances that cause them to question their assumptions. If they are people of faith, they may wonder about their faith. If they are not people of faith they may wonder about faith. Questions go in all sorts of directions. Part of the rich heritage of the Anglican tradition is to be comfortable with people exploring faith from many

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<sup>7</sup> Heuertz, Phileena Mindful Silence: The Heart of Christian Contemplation

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.redletterchristians.org/>

vantage points – from scripture, reason and tradition. To this we could add the Methodist vantage point – experience.

Many theorists suggest that people go through stages of personal development, including faith development. For people to find a mature faith they are likely, for a time, to question the assumptions of their faith tradition and the structures which reinforce those assumptions. If their faith community is not able to bear with their questions they may leave and never return.

Too many evangelism and apologetic programs begin from the premise that every question has an easy answer. Some of the best catechetical work begins with inviting and respecting people's questions and being their companion in the search for truth. So many people speak of how their Christian faith has been enlivened when they have heard different perspectives on the Christian faith from people of different gender, cultural background, nationality or race.

St Mellitus College adopts this approach in training people for ministry and in shaping the Church of England. They describe it as generous orthodoxy and explain it this way,

Generous Orthodoxy is a conviction of the life-giving nature of the Christian gospel, its beauty, its richness, its endless fascination, and a serious commitment to exploring and explaining it deeply and clearly as we can. It is an understanding that such an Orthodoxy gives you a big view of the world, one that is capable of embracing “whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable” as St Paul puts it in Philippians 4. It believes that God is in his very being generous love and that those who know him will be recognised by their own spirit of generous love especially towards their fellow Christians. It is a way of life and thinking that constantly expresses its dependence upon the Holy Spirit as the one who breathes life into theological work, and to the life of the church, who alone enables us to see, to understand and to experience “the breadth, and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God”.

I hope that contemplative action and generous orthodoxy will be features of our comprehensive Anglicanism in which we experience flourishing by grace. I hope and pray that they our work as Synod will be fashioned in the same way.

With all of this in mind I commend our work to God and to you.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**A SAFE CHURCH CULTURE**  
**EXPRESSED IN THE BEHAVIOURS WE DESIRE FROM ONE ANOTHER**  
*A working document – August 2019*

Focus Area ↓	Our expectation	We desire to see situations where clergy, church workers and lay people are	We have an acceptable situation where clergy, church workers and lay people are	We will take steps to address concerning conduct where clergy, church workers and lay people are
	Cultural Phase	CREATIVE	COMPLIANT	CORROSIVE
	Catchphrase – Behaving	“Above the line”	“On the line”	“Below the line”
<p><b>Flourishing:</b>            We wish to see a comprehensive expression of Anglicanism develop within the Diocese through which people are flourishing by God’s grace.</p>	<p>finding innovative ways of enabling and encouraging people in their ministry area and their colleagues to fulfil their vocation and calling.</p>	<p>enabling and encouraging people in their ministry area and their colleagues to fulfil their vocation and calling.</p>	<p>misusing power, diminishing others or engaging in factionalism which restricts or impedes the ministry of others.</p>	
<p><b>Being a community:</b>            We will value the wellbeing of others. We will encourage each other to participate in the life of the church. We will consider the impact of our behaviour on others.</p>	<p>Preferencing the wellbeing of people over other demands or expectations</p> <p>Finding new ways of participating in and encouraging others to participate in church life.</p> <p>Openly reflecting with their leaders, peers and immediate team about the impact of their behaviour on others</p>	<p>Clearly valuing the wellbeing of others</p> <p>Using existing processes to encourage people to participate in the life of the church.</p> <p>Actively participating in church life.</p> <p>Responding thoughtfully and appropriately to enquiries about the impact of their behaviour on others.</p>	<p>Acting in ways which diminish the wellbeing of others</p> <p>Disengaging from participation in wider church life</p> <p>Behaving in ways that discourage people from participating in church life.</p> <p>Resisting appropriate enquiry into and accountability for the impact of their behaviours on others</p>	

<p><b>Relating to each other:</b> We will treat each other with respect and dignity, irrespective of ability, gender, sexuality, race, age or contribution to the church. We will act with integrity and honesty in our interactions with each other.</p>	<p>Exercising leadership that affirms Christ's welcome to all people.</p> <p>Developing and implementing processes that enhance transparency, integrity and honesty in their ministry setting</p>	<p>Clearly treating other people with respect and dignity consistent with the expectations of <i>Being Together</i> and <i>Faithfulness in Service</i></p> <p>Acting with transparency integrity and honesty in their interactions with others.</p>	<p>Behaving in a disrespectful or harmful manner to based on a person's impairment, gender, sexuality, race, age or engagement with the church. Behaving dishonestly or engaging in behaviour which lacks integrity or transparency.</p>
<p><b>Communicating with each other:</b> We will communicate respectfully with others, and not in a way that threatens, belittles or humiliates. We will speak with integrity and honesty, and refrain from speculation and gossip.</p>	<p>Working to enhance positive and transparent communication (written, visual and verbal) aimed at strengthening and encouraging others.</p>	<p>Communicating respectfully and openly (in writing, visually and verbally) in ways that encourages others.</p>	<p>Communicating (in writing, visually and verbally) in ways that are dishonest, lack integrity, threaten, belittle, humiliate, speculate adversely, or engage in gossip.</p>

<p><b>Acknowledging difference:</b> We will respect those who are different from us and not isolate or ridicule them. We will listen to and seek to understand the beliefs, opinions, and practices of others, even when we do not share their views</p>	<p>proactive in including people who we experience as different</p> <p>establishing and promoting respectful opportunities to listen to and understand people’s different perspectives</p>	<p>respecting people who we experience as different</p> <p>engaging in open and respectful dialogue with people with whom they disagree.</p>	<p>disrespectful of people who we experience as different; isolating them or ridiculing them.</p> <p>Aggressive in their engagement with the views of people with whom they disagree</p>
<p><b>Responding to conflict:</b> We will accept responsibility for our part in a conflict. We will be willing to play our part in resolving a conflict.</p>	<p>initiating processes to resolve conflict and help others resolve conflict.</p>	<p>participating willingly in resolving conflicts of which they are part and of which they are aware</p>	<p>blaming others for the existence of conflict</p> <p>not participating in processes aimed at resolving conflict</p>
<p><b>Promoting Safety:</b> We will promote behaviours that support the physical, psychological, social, spiritual and moral safety of all people.</p>	<p>imagining and implementing practices that enhance a safe church environment and individual safety focussing on the needs of the child or vulnerable person</p>	<p>actively and willingly implementing all of safety recommendations and protocols focussing on the needs of the child or the vulnerable person</p>	<p>slow in implementing safety recommendations or who actively discourage their implementation</p> <p>who preference the needs of the institution or the wrongdoer over the child or the vulnerable person</p>

## ***Visitors to the Diocese***

*The Rt Rev Andrew Curnow*  
*The Rt Rev Dr Stephen Pickard*  
*The Rt Rev William Ray*  
*The Rt Rev Dr Michael Stead*  
*The Very Reverend Dr Mary Lewis*  
*The Very Reverend Andrew Tremlett*  
*The Reverend Peter Laurence*  
*The Reverend Dr Donna Lazenby*  
*The Reverend Chris Thomson*

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

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

*The Reverend Kate Prowd* was consecrated as an Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Melbourne on 6 October 2018.

*The Very Reverend Dr Keith Joseph* was consecrated and installed as the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of North Queensland

*The Reverend Mark Short* was consecrated and installed as the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Canberra Goulburn on 6 April 2019.

*The Venerable Donald Kirk* was consecrated and installed as the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Riverina on 15 June 2019.

*The Reverend Canon Malcolm Richards* was consecrated Assistant Bishop of Sydney on 6 July 2019.

*The Venerable Denise Ferguson* was ordained a Bishop on 21 July 2019 and was appointed Assistant Bishop of Adelaide.

*The Reverend Keith Dalby* was consecrated as the 5<sup>th</sup> Bishop of the Murray on 16 August 2019 and installed on 17 August 2019.

*The Reverend Mark Calder* will be consecrated on 21 November 2019 and installed on 23 November 2019 as the 11<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Bathurst.

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

*The Reverend Jacqueline Drewe* was appointed Priest in Charge of the Parish of Morpeth on 7 November 2018.

*The Reverend James Brooks* was appointed Associate Minister for the Parish of Forster on 24 January 2019.

*The Reverend Amanda Brockwell* was appointed Priest in Charge of the Parish of Harrington Coopernook on 30 January 2019.

*The Reverend Michelle Hazel-Jawhary* was installed as Canon of Christ Church Cathedral on 3 February 2019.

*The Reverend Andrew Eaton* was installed as Canon of Christ Church Cathedral on 3 February 2019.

*The Reverend Stephen Powter* was appointed part time Priest in Charge of the Parish of Toukley Budgewoi on 4 February 2019.

*The Reverend Peter Middleton* was appointed part time Priest in Charge of the Parish of Gresford Paterson on 27 February 2019.

*The Reverend Andrew Eaton* was appointed Chaplain at the University of Newcastle one day per week on 1 March 2019.

*The Reverend Alison Williams* was appointed Associate Priest 0.3FTE in the Parish of Buladelah and Tea Gardens on 18 March 2019.

*The Reverend Kevin Wares* was appointed Diocesan Director of Formation on 2 April 2019.

*The Reverend Kimberly Sawyer* was appointed Priest in Charge of the Parish of St John's Newcastle on 8 May 2019.

*The Reverend David Hesketh* commenced in a Chaplaincy role with Samaritans on 9 September 2019.

*The Reverend Tracey Matthews* was appointed Rector of the Parish of Charlestown on 16 September 2019.

*The Reverend Jody Zammit* was appointed Rector of the Parish of Lakes Anglican on 30 September 2019.

## ***Diocesan Office Appointments and Resignations***

*Ms Kate Turnbull* concluded her role as the Safe Ministry Assurance Officer on 20 February 2019.

*Ms Louise Mackay* resigned as Communications Manager on 1 March 2019.

*Mrs Zoe Williams* was appointed Accounts Officer on 11 March 2019.

*Mrs Nadene Watts* was appointed Finance and Accounts Officer on 25 March 2019.

*Ms Steff Fenton* was appointed Communications Manager on 3 June 2019.

*Mrs Lyndsey McKenzie* was appointed Safe Ministry Assurance Officer on 3 June 2019.

*Mr Stephen Phillips* concluded his role as Diocesan Chief Executive on 3 June 2019.

*Ms Megan Moffat* was appointed Finance Officer on 5 August 2019.

*Mrs Amanda Zaicos* concluded her role as Parish and Administration Support on 22 August 2019.

*Mrs Debbie Torok* concluded her role as Parish and Administration Support on 22 August 2019.

*Mrs Nadene Watts* concluded her role as Finance and Accounts Officer on 2 September 2019.

## ***Ordinations***

*The Reverend John Quilter* was ordained a Priest on 1 December 2018.

*The Reverend Nicole Baldwin* was ordained a Priest on 1 December 2018.

*The Reverend Jacqueline Drewe* was ordained a Priest on 1 December 2018.

*The Reverend Philip Morris* was ordained a Priest on 1 December 2018.

*The Reverend James Brooks* was ordained a Priest on 24 January 2019.

*The Reverend Kimberly Sawyer* was ordained a Priest on 8 May 2019.

*The Reverend Jesse Baker* was ordained a Deacon on 27 June 2019.

*The Reverend Zeb McKrell* was ordained a Deacon on 28 June 2019.

*The Reverend Melanie Whalley* was ordained a Deacon on 29 June 2019.

*The Reverend Angela Peverell* was ordained a Deacon on 30 June 2019.

### **Retirements**

*The Reverend Loy Buckley* retired on 11 November 2018 and has moved to the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

*The Reverend Karen Jansson* retired on 3 February 2019. Subsequently, she moved to the Diocese of Brisbane.

*The Reverend Pam Fraser* retired on 12 September 2019 and is spending time in the United Kingdom.

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

*David Battrick* resigned as Rector of the Parish of East Maitland on 9 November 2018 and was deposed from holy orders on 4 December 2018.

*The Reverend Julia Perry* resigned as Director of Formation and Canon of the Cathedral on 31 December 2018.

*The Reverend Dr Fergus King* resigned as Rector of the Parish of Kotara South on 3 February 2019.

*The Reverend Kevin Wares* resigned as Rector of the Parish of Wyong on 31 March 2019.

*The Reverend Tim Waghorn* resigned as Rector of the Parish of Lakes Anglican on 21 July 2019.

*The Reverend David Hesketh* resigned as Priest in Charge of the Parish of Windale on 8 September 2019.

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

Sunday School Hall, Allworth was deconsecrated on 24 November 2018.

St John's Church, Point Clare was deconsecrated on 25 November 2018.

St David's Church, Teralba was deconsecrated on 20 December 2018.

St Nicholas' Church, Tuncurry was deconsecrated 30 December 2018.

St Andrew's, Church Seaham was deconsecrated 9 February 2019.

St Mark's Church, Comboyne was deconsecrated 11 February 2019.

St Barnabas Church Booral was deconsecrated 24 February 2019.

St Thomas Church Glen William was deconsecrated on 30 March 2019.

The Parish of Clarence Town dissolved on 31 March 2019. St John's Clarence Town joined the Parish of Dungog and St Columba's Karuah joined the Parish of Bulahdelah Tea Gardens.

St Luke's Church, Coopernook was deconsecrated on 19 June 2019.

St Paul's Church, Doyles Creek was deconsecrated on 22 June 2019.

St John's Church, Dyers Crossing was deconsecrated on 30 June 2019.

St Mark's Church Laguna was deconsecrated on 14 July 2019.

St John's Church, Stratford was deconsecrated on 21 July 2019.

St Alban's Church, Charlestown was deconsecrated on 3 August 2019.

St Luke's Church, South Singleton was deconsecrated on 18 October 2019.

### ***Special Anniversaries***

*The Reverend Chris Butterworth* celebrated 35 years of being made a Deacon on 4 February 2019

*The Venerable Canon Arthur Copeman* celebrated 30 years of being made a Deacon on 4 February 2019.

*The Reverend Selwyn Dornan* celebrated 25 years of being made a Priest on 5 February 2019.

*The Reverend Daniel Connor* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Francis Duffy* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Anne Lye* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Barbara Morgan* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Pauline Grabham* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Sandra Hulyer* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Wendy Jackson* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Karen Jansson* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Peter Rothnie* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Margaret Tye* celebrated 10 years of being made a Deacon on 20 February 2019.

*The Reverend Philip Thirlwell* celebrated 60 years of being made a Priest on 24 February 2019.

*The Reverend Roy Hazlewood* celebrated 65 years of being made a deacon on 28 February 2019.

*The Reverend Roy Hazlewood* celebrated 65 years of being made a priest on 21 December 2019.

### ***In Memoriam***

Among the faithful departed, we make special mention of:

*The Reverend Bill Howarth* died on 17 February 2019.