



The Right Reverend Stuart Robinson Diocesan Bishop

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Pastoral Letter

Christmas 2016

Beloved in Christ,

Advent greetings!

Given recent shifts across the geopolitical scene (globally) and our own local issues (like the much needed Royal Commission[s]), I am always most heartened – in this Season – by God’s reminder that he has his ‘finger on the pulse’.

Seven centuries before the event took place, our Heavenly Father revealed through his servant Isaiah that, ‘the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel’ (Isaiah 7:14). ‘God with us’, in the person of his Christ addressed the principal cause of the abovementioned foment; our sin. Yes, our Lord Jesus came into the world to ‘save his people from their sins’ – Matthew 1:21.

And in the Epistle set down for Christmas Day, Paul masterfully ties together Jesus’ first and second coming (the focus of Advent) thus, ‘...we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his own, eager to do what is good’ – Titus 2:13-14.

In this period between Jesus’ ascension and return our Father is working out his good purposes through us – the redeemed, sanctified people of God. So thank you for being eager to do what is good in this time of expectant waiting. Thank you for being warm, welcoming, creative and engaging in your ministries through the week and as the gathered community on Sundays and other times. Thank you for your prayerfulness and generosity; your heart for the lost and marginalised is such a tonic. Any wonder new ministries are flourishing, churches are being planted, ‘seekers’ are being drawn to Christ and people are presenting for ministry selection.

On that note, in November our Cathedral was filled with family and friends who attended the Ordination to the Priesthood of fourteen fine women and men. And it continues: In January, I’ll be locally ordaining as part-time (transitional) honorary deacons, Sally Cullen, Tony McLennan, Graeme Dunn, Robyn Baxter and Paul Baxter. Then in February, I’ll be ‘deaconing’ John Kurivilla, Tim Purser, Liz Rankin, Anna Boxwell and Susan Baird. Do keep these gifted and godly saints in your prayers.

I referenced the Royal Commission above. We have (as directed) made a number of submissions. These exercises are exacting, time consuming and costly. Indeed, the volume and complexity of 'safe church' and professional standards matters has remained a constant throughout 2016. You will be pleased to know that many victims of abuse are being cared for (by our diocese) and perpetrators have – in recent times – received custodial sentences. Even in such dark circumstances people are coming to faith in Christ and we, as a church and diocese, are being reconciled to people and families. God's remarkable grace shines through tragedy and sin (ours).

Following the pattern of Bishop Christopher Barlow, I have been also serving as rector (for a time) of the Parish of West Goulburn. Bishop Trevor was similarly engaged at Harden/Murrumburrah (and having completed that assignment, he moves on to Bega) and Bishop Matt was recently installed as the rector, part-time, of Kambah. Bishop Stephen continues to serve among the people at Woden. These engagements afford us the opportunity to preach, lead and pastor locally whilst continuing a wider episcopal ministry. This exercise, in the light of *some* of the presenting diocesan issues, is life giving.

You prayed earnestly for the restoration to full health of General Manager, Mr Trevor Ament. The Lord has indeed brought Trevor through an extended period of chemotherapy and he is now on a graduated return to work programme. God be praised! Our dear friend, Bishop Matt, served brilliantly as 'caretaker' in Trevor's absence and has now relinquished that role to focus, inter alia, on ministry training and development and the parish of Kambah. And the indefatigable Bishop Trevor continues to oversee his regions with great aplomb whilst also serving as Vicar-General.

Recently, our long standing Chair of Anglicare, Dr Ingrid Moses completed her term. Dr Moses – in concert with her Board, CE Jeremy Halcrow and the diocese, steered the organisation into greater health and Kingdom effectiveness, I would opine. We are so grateful to God for Ingrid's courage, tenacity, faith and grace. Yes, our Lord very much has his 'finger on the pulse'.

On behalf of my Episcopal team, the Diocesan Services team, Bishop in Council – and my dear wife, Jane, I bid you God's richest blessings for Christmas – and the New Year.

For Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Robinson" with a cross at the beginning of the first stroke. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

The Right Reverend Stuart Robinson
Bishop of Canberra & Goulburn
14 December 2016