

Introduction

Beloved in Christ

I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land upon which we meet. We give thanks for how its mountains, streams and plains have sustained her people and the elders who continue to care for it. We give thanks for the many Aboriginal people who call this place home.

Home is a special place regardless of your creed, your colour, your background.

Jesus knew the importance of building houses and the significance of creating a home. As a carpenter, he knew that getting the foundations right is vital. He told the crowds that if you build a house with nothing but sand for its foundation, the place won't last. But build it on the rock, then, it will withstand all the storms that come and crash against it. Such a house will be not only solid, it will become a home. He said this in Luke 6:46-49 (NRSV):

⁴⁶ "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷ I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. ⁴⁸ That one is like a person building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.

Jesus' illustration was prompted by the large crowds that were coming to see a spectacle but lacked any interest in what he was saying.

As the contemporary Bible translator Eugene Peterson puts it, Jesus says,

Why are you so polite with me, always saying 'Yes, sir,' and 'that's right, sir,' but never doing a thing I tell you? These words I speak to you are not mere additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundation words, words to build a life on'. Verses 45-46.

Jesus doesn't offer free building advice; he's telling them what discipleship looks like – the pursuit of a solid home where everyone can weather the

storms of life. Whatever part we play in God's great work, lay or clergy, young or old.

When we put Jesus' words into practice, the church emerges as a home where people grow deep and strong; a place where the love of Jesus transforms people and communities. Our diocesan 3D vision is in place to facilitate this kind of transformation. Let me update you:

3Ds

All our work around debt, development and deployment is to advance the transformation for which we all long.

Debt

As has been reported to Synod, we have a debt burden within the Diocese, our central administration. This debt, as you know, was incurred through issues pertaining to Clergy Superannuation and the South Coast schools.

Priorities in ministry that were set in the past must be honoured if we are to deal faithfully with the present. The wind up of the Diocesan Superannuation Scheme was a significant expense – *but* it was vital that we met our financial obligations and that we care for those who have given so much of themselves over the years, particularly in times when clergy and their families did not have access to community based schemes as they do now.

Similarly, much work has been undertaken to ensure the South Coast schools' financial position continues to recover, thus enabling them to help their children and their communities thrive.

In passing, I must say that I am greatly heartened by the work undertaken by all our school principals, their boards, staff, students and the Anglican Schools Commission. They play a vital role in our diocese. I look forward to hearing more about their activities.

We must also thank God for all who minister in schools – whatever their hue. Great gospel advances are underway in schools (public and private); an eternally significant ministry.

I am also grateful to God for the gracious leadership of Mr Andrew Duchesne (from the South Coast Anglican College) and wish him well for 'retirement'.

Thanks also be to God for the pioneering headship of Dr Ian Grant from The Riverina Anglican College. Ian retires at year's end after a remarkably fruitful and much loved ministry.

I am pleased to report progress is being made in reducing the debt of the Diocese; to date we have repaid a total of \$3.2 million.

The professionalism, wisdom and support of the Anglican Investment and Development Fund (AIDF) Board and Diocesan Finance Committee, has been invaluable. I am looking forward to hearing of the work they have undertaken over the last year and thank Canon Mark Baker and Mr Tim McGhie, the respective 'Chairs', for their focus and wisdom.

Under the aegis of debt I must also report that The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is rightly turning the spotlight on our church's darkest moments. Too many people have endured abuse by clergy, church workers, and lay leaders.

Thankfully, the Commission has given many survivors an opportunity to share their story; some 5,000 to date.

For many years, as outlined in detail in my recent pastoral letter, our Diocese has put in place a series of evolving protocols and policies to care for people. We continue to invest our time and expertise in giving ongoing care and assistance to survivors. We have also provided a submission to the Royal Commission; this took hundreds of hours to complete and comprised over 550 documents - 2,500 pages.

To date, in Canberra and Goulburn, identified offenders have been investigated and when appropriate prosecuted. We always seek to cooperate fully with police and relevant authorities as we strive to keep vulnerable people safe. Our next step involves 'redress' for survivors.

Redress comprises at least three parts: a personal apology, lifetime therapeutic care and financial assistance. Money can never change the past. It *may* assist victim's lives into future. Redress will cost us millions of dollars.

Let me be clear: these outgoings can never repair the enormous damage done to so many people, families and communities. In prioritising their just claims, we are, I believe, demonstrating a living faith.

I am grateful for the work of the Reverend Peter Barnett, Mrs Celia Irving, Ms Alison Payne, Bishop Matthew Brain, our professional standards committees and legal teams for their dedication and compassion to resolve many difficult and delicate professional standards matters. Exposure to such matters extracts a very great cost which we must bear.

Development

Properties used by parishes, schools, retirement villages and our agencies across the ACT and south-eastern NSW, are the direct result of the generosity and sacrifices made by the body of Christ in this place, over time.

Some years ago we took the decision to develop the Jamieson Apartments on the site of our former diocesan offices. The apartments, which are now all sold or leased, are home to many people.

The Jamieson's architectural quality has been widely acknowledged and I am so grateful for the work of Mr Phillip Davies and his team who brought this project to its fruition. Phil is to be widely commended and loudly applauded for his leadership, service and vision.

Other parishes have engaged in developments designed to enhance their capacity for ministry. For example, Hawker Parish completed a ministry centre while on the Sapphire Coast, St. James' House provides office space and a room for crisis accommodation.

Our Cathedral has made significant strides in implementing their 'conservation plan' to preserve the fabric of St. Saviour's. I do acknowledge the work of outgoing Heritage Chair, Dr John Quilter, and our Dean, Phil Saunders.

In concert with Bishop in Council, I have also been pondering how other resources might be developed to address our future obligations to victims of abuse and to seed new ministry.

The insights gleaned from the Jamieson project have helped shape the brief and trajectory of a new Property Development Commission. This Commission will provide the oversight for planning and development. I look forward to hearing the report from the Chair of that Commission, Mrs Meg Brighton – presented in her absence by Bishop Matt.

I am very thankful for the Anglican Diocesan Services (ADS) team. The staff, senior executive and Bishop Matthew Brain have served us well over the last year.

When our Registrar and General Manager, Mr Trevor Ament, was diagnosed with cancer in April this year, Mr Paul Brand, Ms Marianne Cavanagh, Mr Luke Vardanega, Ms Heather Walsh and Bishop Matt stepped into the breach. Trevor's treatment has been extensive and we are looking forward to welcoming him back in time for the Christmas party! Keep him and his family in your prayers.

Deployment

Our task is not limited to dealing with past issues or developing resources for the future. My aim, our hope, our charter, is to see more people active in the 'harvest'. Our diocese may not be the largest or the wealthiest in Australia but we are *prudently adventurous*.

Let me tell you some of the ways deployment of people into God's harvest is unfolding in our church.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Permanent Diaconate in Australia. We are blessed by a large, creative and gracious household of deacons, ably led by Archdeacon Caroline Campbell.

We deploy 32 deacons. They engage in a range of chaplaincy-styled ministries that extend well beyond the sanctuary doors.

Our deacons sit with the elderly who are often lonely and isolated, listening to their stories while bringing hope and companionship.

They are also engaged with the creative arts using their diverse gifts -including floristry- to bring Christ to our communities. They work on the snowfields, as community nurses and hospital chaplains. They work to create communities where faith can flourish in the business world, new housing developments and among our city's poorest and most disadvantaged residents. Deacons were the ones who pioneered 'fresh expressions' of ministry long before that descriptor existed.

Although they'll never tell you, many of our deacons work with little or no financial provision for their ministry.

Deacons are often isolated because successful ministry for a deacon may look and feel different. However their diaconal – servant – ministry is the kind of foundation on which our congregational life relies. To illustrate let me share two examples.

Two of the most indefatigable deacons who were there at the beginning - 20 years ago- are still 'in harness'.

The Reverend Jill Elliot serves the community at the RSL Lifecare retirement village - Bill McKenzie Gardens with grace and warmth.

Archdeacon Emeritus Anne Ranse continues to be a great fillip and ambassador for diaconal ministry. She tells the story of diaconal ministry in her new book, *The Servant Ministry of Christ*. Anne's leadership within the Episcopal Task Force on Older People and Ministry is also much valued. And her ministry in reaching those who may be forgotten by friends, families and communities is commendable.

Our chaplains - diaconal, priestly and lay - build 'home' around people, right where they live. These spiritual homes are oases founded on Christ and anchored in his amazing grace.

Now, chaplains come in all shapes and sizes. Our diocese takes its part in deploying chaplains in public schools, bringing kids breakfast and listening to their troubled hearts; in Anglican schools, helping students discover their capacity to take their part in transforming the world through the love of Jesus; in hospitals and healthcare to bring peace to those who are most troubled by sickness and infirmity; in prisons and among first responders, bringing hope and restoration to those most confronted by brokenness and life's disappointments.

It is not only the elderly who need a spiritual home. Children and young people are often expected to simply fit in. I am grateful for the work of Mr Andrew Edwards, the Synergy Board led Dr Ruth Edwards and all those committed to youth ministry. They are creating spiritual homes for a new generation to discover the amazing grace that underpins our lives together.

I referenced 'fresh expressions of ministry' in connection with the diaconate. The late, the Reverend Gail Stevenson, prior to her Priesting, served in

leadership on the F5 team in Goulburn – a ministry that, in turn, has planted F7 and F10.

I'm also encouraged by other 'fresh expressions' such as the South Sudanese Anglican Ministry in Spence and the Business Life network in Canberra.

Deployment is not simply about getting more deacons and priests into the field. It involves bishops too!

This synod has the opportunity to consider the investigation undertaken by the Episcopal Election Review Committee, led by Mr Greg Mills and his team. Their efforts have not been entirely straightforward because, among other things, electing a new bishop means retiring the old one first! Many thanks to those of you who participated in the consultations held around our diocese.

Resourcing mission and ministry is always challenging. I am so glad that we have St Mark's National Theological Centre as our home where leaders are trained and are learning to be disciple-making disciples.

Sincere thanks to Dr Andrew Cameron, his team, and the St Mark's Council, led by Bishop Trevor, for their dedication to the task of theological formation, not only for us, but also for many other dioceses and churches around the nation.

While the university level training gets most of the attention, the work of St Mark's Registered Training Organisation (RTO) deserves mention.

Not only does the RTO help form the next generation of clergy and provide opportunity for people to develop their leadership gifts, it opens the door to ministry to those who often feel left outside by our educational methods. Early school leavers, people for whom English is not their first language and older people who can't leave home easily.

Consequently, St Mark's is a blessing to many students, especially to those who live in rural and remote areas. It's dedication to providing distance education enables each of these students to build spiritual homes right where God's kingdom is needed. Our ADS team are working with the leadership of St. Marks to come up with a funding and resourcing model that is sustainable in our current context.

The mission of the church does not rest solely with the ordained; far from it. In fact, the church's capacity only grows when each and every Anglican takes Jesus' words to heart and acts upon them.

Our Centre for Lay Ministry and Mission, under the care of Archdeacon John Barnes and Mrs Margaret Wheelwright, provides courses and training programmes available to all our parishioners and continues to organise the yearly Convention. This year hundreds of people were blessed and heartened by the ministry of Mike and Sally Breen at our diocesan convention.

Likewise, Anglicare plays a significant, but often underrated, role in the church's mission. Some may only see Anglicare as a welfare agency because it doesn't offer narrowly defined worship or evangelism. Yet, Anglicare tackles disadvantage and addresses social injustice day in day out, activities that Jesus said, and did, much about during his ministry.

Anglicare's provision of early childhood education, transition programs for those leaving care, independent living units and outlets for recycled goods meet the needs of people in practical ways.

I am thankful for our CEO, Mr Jeremy Halcrow. Jeremy continues to make Anglicare an innovative and sustainable organisation. I must also highlight the dedication and leadership of Professor Ingrid Moses. Ingrid's time as 'Chair' of the Anglicare Board will conclude at the end of the year. She is a generous and wise leader.

The theme of 'home' has figured prominently in the work of the Public Issues Commission ably led by Bishop Stephen Pickard who, as Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, brings much to our table.

The Public Issues Commission and the Centre for Christianity and Culture help us to address issues that are complex and oftentimes, confronting.

Fruit of their recent labour is, *Being the Body of Christ: A Conversation Series About Same-Sex Relationships, Marriage and the Church*, which will be launched later this Synod.

The booklet responds to Synod's request for material that will assist local congregations, who use the resource, to respectfully and prayerfully dialogue around these very complex and relevant issues. Dr Wayne Brighton and

Professor Stephen Pickard are to be commended for their dedication and care with this project.

I am thankful too for the Reverend Karen Kime's leadership. Karen has stepped down from her diocesan role in indigenous ministry to focus on doctoral studies and pastoral ministry. If we are to be a truly Australian Church we must be seeking pastors and leaders from amongst our first people; Karen's passion has certainly taught us that much.

I am delighted to welcome Bishop Rob Gillion and his dear wife, Janine, from the Diocese of Riverina. We are blessed to be led and taught by Bishop Rob as he reflects on Scripture with us. He will also 'adorn' tomorrow night's dinner with his famous one-person show!

Conclusion

A great many people serve daily to make our church a home for us all. My Episcopal team - Bishop Trevor, Bishop Matt and Bishop Stephen, Archdeacons, Dean Phillip, the ADS team, my Executive Officer Ms Bev Forbes, Mrs Celia Irving and the Reverend Peter Barnett, my intercessors and my grace-filled wife, Jane, have all enabled my ministry.

I stand here today because of their love and kindness.

So, for this 'family' gathering, may we be gracious to each other as God has been gracious to us.

May we be slow to speak and quick to listen as God listens to us.
May our words be seasoned with salt and full of light as Christ is the light of the world.

May we know how lives built on Jesus words' turn houses into homes that can withstand any turmoil or tumult.

All the more so as our risen Lord not only sits on the throne of heaven, but also calls us 'friends' and invites us still to sit with him to talk, listen and learn.

In the Name of Christ. Amen.