

Hope in Tough Times

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Hope in Tough Times

Part 1: Hope in Tough Times

I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather and in so doing honour elders past and present.

It is timely that this Synod is meeting over the weekend of the Federal election in that parallels that can be drawn. Like voters across the country, this Synod will be confronted with some big picture issues over the next few days. Our Diocese is facing serious challenges to our mission which are unfolding on a much larger, national and even global stage: from the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse to rural decline; from theological disagreements over human sexuality to the impact of secularisation.

Our nation too is being tossed on stormy seas beyond the direct control of our political leaders: from looming military conflict in the Middle East to the end of the international commodities boom which could potentially lead to economic downturn.

One undercurrent of the Federal election is that voters want a leader who will deliver Australia to a place of certainty, safety and security. Or to put it more simply: We are looking for hope in tough times.

A survey last week by Anglicare Australia (supported by our local Anglicare) of its 500 of clients – more than 10 per cent of whom live in our Diocese – suggested that a leader who could promise stability and security would be highly attractive to the electorate.

These voters, most of them in very vulnerable circumstances already, expressed fears about looming job cuts and unemployment; frustration about seemingly out of control rises in the cost of living and the lack of affordable housing. And a very large group of them expressed anxiety about the increasing numbers of asylum seekers.

While we may not agree with the politics surrounding some of these issues, it is understandable that people tossed about on rough seas will hope for a safe haven where they can rest and rebuild.

The Bible is very clear on the sort of Christian leadership that delivers hope in extraordinarily tough times. The Bible calls for leadership that is very firm on core beliefs, but allows scope for different approaches. It is leadership that is strong when it comes to proclaiming with clarity the gospel of Jesus Christ, but it calls on the leader to model love and respect; openness and patience with those with whom he or she disagrees. This concept of leadership points to my vision for this Diocese as a 'mixed economy church.' The root of this model is expounded by Paul in Romans Chapter 15, verses 1 to 13.

ROMANS 15: 1-13

15 If our faith is strong, we should be patient with the Lord's followers whose faith is weak. We should try to please them instead of ourselves. ² We should think of their good and try to help them by doing what pleases them. ³ Even Christ did not try to please

himself. But as the Scriptures say, “The people who insulted you also insulted me.”⁴ And the Scriptures were written to teach and encourage us by giving us hope.⁵ May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live at peace with each other, as you follow Christ.⁶ Then all of you together will praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ Honor God by accepting each other, as Christ has accepted you.⁸ I tell you that Christ came as a servant of the Jews to show that God has kept the promises he made to their famous ancestors. Christ also came,⁹ so that the Gentiles would praise God for being kind to them. It is just as the Scriptures say, “I will tell the nations about you and I will sing praises to your name.”

¹⁰ The Scriptures also say to the Gentiles, “Come and celebrate with God’s people.”

¹¹ Again the Scriptures say, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles. All you nations, come and worship him.”

¹² Isaiah says, “Someone from David’s family will come to power. He will rule the nations, and they will put their hope in him.”

¹³ I pray that God, who gives hope, will bless you with complete happiness and peace because of your faith. And may the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope.

The context for understanding this passage is found in Romans 14, famously addressing the problem of how those who enjoy greater Christian freedom in their thought and action should deal with those who don’t—the so-called weaker sisters and brothers. Paul encourages ‘the strong’ not to view ‘the weak’ as failures at living up to their standards of faith but, rather, as joint members of Christ who are united in Him.

Rather than put ourselves in the position of having to judge a weaker sister or brother for being weak, it’s better says Paul, that we forego our rights and thereby avoid provoking a scandal in the first place: “Let us therefore no longer pass judgement on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another” (14: 13).

Where a weighty Gospel matter is involved, however, Paul never flinches in siding with one perspective over another. The theological and pastoral challenge is to know the difference between “food and drink matters” and “Gospel truth matters.” We need help distinguishing between the issues where we have freedom of choice, on the one hand—but where we ought also to renounce our Christian freedom if necessary for the sake of the weak. And matters that undermine the essence of the Gospel, where like Paul, we must stand firm. In Paul’s context this sort of issue was the Judaizers’ requirement that Gentile converts be circumcised.

Paul’s path forward is to encourage us to focus on persevering with the weak. He shows his hand by moving explicitly to address the issue of Jewish and Gentile Christians in the same Church. This was the equivalent of the “human sexuality” or “lay presidency” or “women bishops” crisis of the day.

In verse 15: 5, “the God of steadfastness and encouragement”, in other words the God of the Scriptures “in accord with Christ Jesus”—is asked to grant harmony in both Christian life and praise to this “mixed economy Church” of Jews and Gentiles.

Philosopher Bertrand Russell said that a strong ideological position may be a veiled bid for power. Paul presents this spirit of rivalry in these passages as the fundamental barrier to realising the Christian promise uniting strong and weak, Gentile and Jew, in Jesus Christ.

This passage, therefore, suggests there is significant room for Christians to disagree as long as it’s done in the right spirit. However, the point is this: on the ‘other side’ of any argument we must see the people behind the words. As human beings, the ‘other’ is of unquestioned value and Christ identifies with them, so insulting them means insulting him. But this does not mean that they are necessarily right. They are to be respected for the sake of who they are, though this does not mean accepting any of their beliefs with which we might disagree.

The end willed by God is joyful mutual abiding in the body of Christ, which requires openness to God’s Spirit by the whole body. God desires to fill our hearts with the Spirit of peace to replace the anxiety we feel about becoming the ‘losers’ in a power struggle. Even those, like me, in perceived positions of power, can sometimes be driven by a feeling of isolation, that the so-called ‘other side’ has strength in numbers. This is a dangerous mindset to fall into. Christ does not despise the strong nor deny their rights. However, the very fact of their strength is a pointer to their responsibility in Christ. The gospel redefines strength in terms of mercy and forbearance. This undercuts the whole worldly logic of self-assertion and winning at the expense of the other.

Giving our fears over to God, who is sovereign over all, is the starting point for an imaginative re-badging of our differences within the body of Christ. God really can bring peace and harmony in his Church, despite the plain fact of division, disunity and the ever-present risk of damaging each other. Paul is very frank in acknowledging this reality. And yet his tone is one of encouragement and hopefulness. This is because Paul trusts that God can deliver the outcome he constantly prays for.

So the Bishop’s Dream that we can become ***a diocese where the love of Jesus transforms individuals and communities*** ultimately begins with us trusting in the Lord’s greater purposes. Only He can bind us into one healthy body functioning together for mission. This is our hope in tough times.

Drawing Hope From the Past

Our 150th year reminds us to look back first, drawing on the experience and inspiration from the pioneers of our past, before reaching out towards the dream. When you take on a leadership role, it is wise to look back at your predecessors to absorb the hard lessons they already learnt. As you reflect on their triumphs and failures, sometimes one particular Christian forebear will resonate more deeply in our soul. They can even become spiritual mentors lighting the path out of a moral or ministry maze. For me that guide has been Bishop Barlow.

Christopher George Barlow was the third Bishop of this Diocese, effectively covering the period from Federation to the start of the Great War. He was installed as Bishop in 1902 and retired in March 1915, just prior to his death at Cooma rectory.

This was the Edwardian period: Emily Pankhurst and the Suffragettes were fighting for the vote; the Salvation Army had become a powerhouse for social reform. William Booth's book - *In Darkest England* - published in the 1890s, influenced Edwardian Christians to rediscover a vision for social welfare based on his Christian evangelical principles.

Locally, the most significant event was the founding of Canberra as the nation's capital.

Born in 1858 in Dublin, there are two defining facts of Barlow's life. Firstly, he entered his stepfather's manufacturing firm in London, without going to university. Secondly, he resigned his partnership at this firm to become secretary to his lifelong friend George Stanton, Bishop of North Queensland. In the early 1900s Cape York was very much the frontier of the British Empire.

In 1881 he entered the ministry serving at Mackay, Charters Towers, and then St James' Pro-Cathedral, Townsville. On Stanton's translation to Newcastle, Barlow was elected to succeed him, becoming the first man ordained in Australia to be elected bishop by an Australian synod. As he had no university degree the appointment was challenged but he was immediately granted a Lambeth doctorate by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Secularism and Anglican Education

The first big lesson I have drawn from Bishop Barlow's legacy is the key role education should play in shaping our mission to the contemporary secular context.

It often feels like we are the first generation to confront the challenge of secularism. But the trajectory of secularisation began over 150 years ago. And we can look to our predecessors for clues on how the Church should respond.

Bishop Barlow pinpointed the growing indifference to religion within the secular school system. And, more importantly, gave the Diocese the confidence and hope that, under God, we could draw on our resources to confront the challenge.

A quick summary of the historical context is required to explain. In the early colonial period schools were run via the local congregations of all the major Christian denominations: Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist and Roman Catholic.

I suspect it was Barlow's own relatively humble educational background that led him to see the important role the church could provide in schooling the average child. He looked to commission rural clergy who could act as community teachers, reaching out to isolated farming families who would otherwise struggle to access secondary education. This is missional thinking. Seeing a social need, and asking how the church might be resourced to meet that need in order to intentionally further the mission Christ.

But Barlow's context was even more complicated, and more relevant to us.

As the 19th century had progressed, the association of Christianity and education became increasingly problematic. Professor Tom Frame explains:

“Schools, and then universities, were the principal battleground for sectarian warfare between competing doctrinal systems and rival visions of society. Education was the place where the churches would seek their ascendancy over one another. Given that believing in some form of divine being and belonging to a religious community was near universal, the churches turned on each other rather than on dealing with the sources of economic inequality or political exclusion.”

Pointing to gaps in the various denominations’ education provision, politicians in the 1870s and 1880s had argued for quality control and standardisation of schooling. And given the churches seemed incapable of working together in harmony, Governments claimed they had no choice but to absorb the church schools and create a universal public education system. The result: a succession of colonial parliaments enacted laws whose chief outcome was marginalising the churches from primary and secondary education in every Australian colony.

Soon public education meant secular education. And whereas the word ‘secular’ had been traditionally understood as non-clerical and non-denominational, it was gradually re-interpreted to mean “without any religious content.” Neutrality became indifference which morphed into animosity and hostility.

It was in this context that Barlow developed his vision for Anglican secondary education.

It was Barlow who first articulated the need to develop a formal network of Diocesan schools. With the choice of Canberra as the national capital, Barlow foresaw that the Monaro would one day sustain a major city. With an eye on Canberra’s future, the Church of England Grammar School for girls and boys was established in Cooma in 1906. This Anglican school would ultimately relocate to Red Hill two decades later, and be renamed Canberra Grammar.

It was Barlow, arguably more than Radford or Burgmann, who understood the power of secondary education to develop minds that could engage in thoughtful Christian dialogue given the increasingly secular context.

On this score our times are not that different to Barlow’s. Yes, we have militant atheists. But they are far from the dominant voice in the public square. As Australians grapple with what it means to live in a multicultural society, there is also a growing openness to religious beliefs of all kinds. A century after they were banished from their classrooms, the churches are again significant stakeholders in education and training, with their contribution to shaping the ethics and values of society respected by the majority of Australians.

However then, as now, the risk for religious schools and tertiary institutions is that they will be identified with the problem of religious conflict. We must ensure that Anglican schools are known as institutions that help their students to be shaped by the love of Jesus – places that teach respect and compassion for all human beings no matter what their background.

Our schools face many very real challenges. In Canberra our schools may have wonderful facilities and healthy waiting lists, but increasingly they face the hard task of remaining

beacons of the gospel in the face of the growing secularism which continues to define the nation's capital. Our regional schools face other challenges. While seeking to provide a faithful Christian witness to their community, they are presented with issues that go to scale and demography when serving a smaller 'market.' To this end, I want to be clear to Synod: there is more work to be done to ensure the longer term sustainability of our south coast schools. I am convinced this will require a closer and continuing working partnership between the school councils, the Diocesan School Council (DSC) and the central agencies of the Diocese.

Nevertheless, at the wonderful Anglican Education Celebration held last month at St Saviour's cathedral it was clear to me that Barlow's vision had come to fruition. Over 700 students representing each of the seven Anglican Schools associated with the Diocese were in attendance. I particularly want to thank Mr Phillip Heath, Head of Radford College and Chaplain, the Reverend Nikolai Blaskow, for organising the service and presentation of eight *Mallus Floribunda* trees: seven to be planted at each of the schools, and one to be planted in the Cathedral grounds. I also want to acknowledge the work Nikolai has done in organising prayer teams. Our mission is hope-**less** unless it comes from the Lord, our calling comes through the guidance of prayer, and all our achievements come as a blessing of the Holy Spirit to the glory of the Father.

Three other significant projects launched this year are shaped by the same spirit that drove Barlow's vision for Anglican education:

- Last month we unveiled plans for our new Anglican School at Googong at the offices of the Mayor of Queanbeyan. I am very excited that a remarkable partnership between the developer, the architects and the Diocesan Schools Council had produced a design that is not only cutting edge in addressing environmental sustainability but one of the most beautiful school designs I have seen. We have already received expressions of interest from nearly 200 people, with building work set to commence in January or February. Stage one of the co-educational facility will include an early learning centre and a primary school, which will open for the start of the 2015 school year. Phase two will be a high school. The facility will eventually accommodate up to 1100 students across all educational levels. Mr Willard and the team from the DSC have served us well in this new venture.
- Secondly, we have commenced a new Anglican Tertiary Ministry, with the Reverend Brad Lovegrove commissioned last month to provide focused leadership to student ministries with Canberra's universities.
- Thirdly, the parish of Ainslie, with the support of the Property Trust, have been successful in gaining Federal Government funding to build All Saints' College, a tertiary residence on the parish site. Although the DA has not yet been approved, the sketch plans are very exciting and illustrate the potential of the proposal. This is a great ministry project aiming to tackle a genuine community need: a critical shortage of affordable rental properties for Canberra's relatively large student population.

Diversity in Mission

The second major lesson I have learnt from Bishop Barlow is the need to recruit clergy from a diverse range of backgrounds and traditions if we are going to take the good news of Jesus out into a complex and diverse society.

Barlow's ministry priorities were shaped by his Low Church formation and outlook but he was not wedded to any party position. *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* records his address to the New South Wales Provincial Synod in 1907, where "he deplored party bigotry within the Church and pleaded for more tolerance and humanity towards differing points of view."

What is most significant about Barlow is that he respected and promoted those of other traditions who were committed to the mission-field. It is for this reason that Barlow did more than any other bishop, in my view, to set the character of this Diocese, as a place that celebrates Christian diversity centred around a common calling to share the good news of Jesus with the world.

Barlow's main priority was to recruit clergy who did not simply expect a settled ministry amongst the middle classes. He had great skill in identifying Christian leaders from all theological traditions, such as the Bush Brothers, who were suitable to work in a rural mission-field.

Barlow brought in people from a range of backgrounds, including people from working class situations. Not surprisingly, given his own educational history, he didn't judge ministry candidates by their academic degrees. Rather, he asked a simple question: what kind of pastor would this person make?

The result was that an entrepreneurial mindset infused the Diocese. He gave clergy the permission to dream big and risk failure, by leading the way.

Barlow focused on the twin strategies of boosting fundraising in order to resource church planting. He reorganised the Church Society which increased support from £600 to nearly £3000 a year. This new found financial strength enabled him to subsidise the poorer parishes, and provide for clerical training. Around 45 churches were built during Barlow's episcopacy.

In a similar way we hope the Jamieson House development will generate the income we need to launch new ministries and build churches. Construction is well underway, with excavations for the basement completed and crane put in place to begin the upwards build. Unit sales remain strong and we have reached a significant financial milestone with income now almost matching the build costs. My appreciation and thanks particularly goes to Phil Davies and his team for their leadership in this complex project.

Of course not all Barlow's big ideas bore fruit. Visionary enterprises, such as the Bishophorpe High School for Girls at Goulburn and a theological college, both set up in 1906, did not ultimately flourish. But the point is he was willing to take the risk and accept the possibility of failure.

The mis-steps ultimately didn't matter. Barlow gave hope to the Diocese through his vision for Anglican education and his promotion of a range of mission activities

It is this spirit that I see reflected in three further developments within our Diocese this year:

1. Missional Activity

In this past year we have been privileged to see new congregations and expressions of church surface across our diocese. These include more formal gatherings such as the Sutton Road Mission District and the Mulwaree Anglican Mission district, through to experimental cafe church, social justice services, new ministry in nursing homes and small groups that have emerged from Alpha courses and the like. It is all very heartening.

2. Support for Renewal Ministries

Secondly, I have acted to provide oversight for what are sometimes described as 'renewal' ministries in the Diocese. The 'charismatic' has a great deal to offer us in our mission, but has historically lived less easily within the Anglican tradition, so in consultation with my Episcopal team I have invited Canon Gill Varcoe to serve as a 'go-to' person for me in this area. She has the relatively unusual combination of being experienced and at home in catholic, evangelical and renewal streams of Anglican theology and worship. Gill will take carriage of arranging opportunities for teaching and mutual encouragement and support, and is also available for missions, seminars, personal mentoring and 'trouble-shooting'.

3. 150th Church Plant Project

Thirdly, Archdeacon Paul Wallis has been commissioned by me to undertake a Sesquicentenary church plant project, drawing on the network developed through the International Ministry based around Canberra's diplomatic community.

It is particularly apt that this project is pioneering - by crossing new cultural frontiers – and looks to the future of the Anglican Church in Australia which must become increasingly ethnically diverse to be true to our mission.

Paul Wallis explains:

“...it will constitute a special unit of church with a mission focused specifically on hospitality towards those in Canberra from overseas. Its special ministry will be to create social opportunities for befriending and helping our international neighbours to feel happy and welcome in Canberra and to enjoy life together in our great city.”

Gathering together a core group of supporters, this new faith community will meet every fortnight at the Wallis' home in Casey. Paul and Ruth were commissioned for this new work by the ministry team from Gungahlin last Sunday.

150th Anniversary

At the heart of the transformative power of the gospel is the hope of new life in Christ.

We tagged our 150th celebrations with three phrases: Be a pioneer. Be a Local. Be inspired. The aim was to encourage each of us to do three things this year:

- Firstly, try at least one new thing at church. Perhaps you have the energy and passion to start a new ministry, a new event, or a new community activity. But pioneers include those who take a risk in supporting a new church venture not just the leaders.
- Secondly, look outwards at your immediate neighbourhood. Start with the people who live in your street. Build relationships and pray for them, looking for opportunities to serve their needs.
- Thirdly, listen to the many stories of how God is working in the lives of people in our churches and Praise God!

For my part, I have committed to five longer-term projects based on the three themes of our celebration 150th year - to be a pioneer, to focus on the needs of my neighbours, and to follow the call of Jesus. My hope and prayer is that each of these projects will have an ongoing legacy for many years to come.

1. St Saviour's Cathedral

With the blessing of our Dean, the Very Reverend Phillip Saunders, I have elected to focus *some* of my personal 'pioneering' efforts on and around our wonderful Cathedral. The Cathedral, of course, has been a focus for our 150th celebrations with the main civic reception for our joint birthday with the City of Goulburn held on the Cathedral commons. I want to thank all those associated with the Cathedral celebrations, especially the Friends of Cathedral for their tireless efforts. It is wonderful to see the success of the St Saviour's Rose which has captured the hearts of many in the Diocese and will soon feature in a special rose garden planned by Goulburn-Mulwaree Council. My hope is to capture the energy around the 150th to bring my dream for the Cathedral to fruition. I want to ensure the Cathedral continues to grow as a centre of excellence and innovation in mission – as evidenced by the Messy Church ministry and new Social Justice Service initiated by Cathedral staff. For my part, together with a committed leadership team and my tireless and good humoured wife, Jane, the F5 congregation has been planted. 'F5' – Fellowship at Five is a contemporary liturgical evening service that reaches open de-churched people. Around 60 or so now call 'F5' home. An adult fellowship group, F10, now meets each Monday morning and small group ministry has also begun.

Another facet of my engagement with our Cathedral is determining – with the Dean, Chapter and Cathedral Council – a strategy for the long-term financial viability of St Saviour's. More work is required in this arena and given that I am now domiciled in our See City, I can attend to this matter more effectively. Our Cathedral was designed and

supervised by Edmund Blackett and his son Arthur, with the foundation stone laid in 1874 with completion in 1884. Bicentennial grants enabled underpinning of tower foundations and construction of the tower in 1988. The Heritage Conservation Project aims, not only to continue the work of completing Edmund Blackett's design but, most urgently, to address serious conservation needs that have arisen. The project will be one of many years and will require extensive funding. It begins this year with the establishment of a Conservation Management Plan being developed by heritage architect Michael Fox Associates. The Heritage Conservation Project will be officially launched in March 2014.

2. Diocesan Social Justice Project

For the second of my 150th projects, I have been pondering, 'Who are my neighbours?' and 'What are their needs?' This is not simply a question I'm asking as I engage with people in our See City. No, no, the souls of Canberra and our vast diocese in general also weigh heavily on my heart. Throughout the year, I have looked out of my office window in Civic and prayed for my neighbours: the politicians and senior public servants that keep the machinery of Government rolling onwards. How do we, the Church, engage with a population that is particularly skeptical of religious claims, one of the most secular and work-oriented cities in Australia? One potential door that I suspect may open easily is around ethics in the workplace. There are examples in the UK where Christian think tanks in this space have developed deep and transformative dialogues with their city on issues around work-life balance, relational well-being and business ethics.

My second project therefore is to ensure the development of a coherent social ethics and social justice agenda, and in this task I will be particularly supported by Bishop Stephen Pickard. We are greatly blessed to have Bishop Stephen remaining connected with us, especially through his new, strategically important role, as Executive Director of Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture at Charles Sturt University. He has provided leadership to Anglicare at a difficult and challenging time in its life. More of that later. But at this point, I do want to publically thank him for his hard work and acknowledge the great wisdom he has applied in that role. Bishop Stephen has built strong relationships with key senior Anglicare managers over the past year, and this means he is well placed to engage with Anglicare's social justice resources as we develop a Diocesan Social Issues Commission. Bishop Genieve has been and will continue to work with +Stephen in this arena.

The Environment Commission is a related committee at the crossroads with membership, and it is my hope that with Bishop Stephen joining the Commission, we will see new energy and impetus around its work. Bishop Stephen, as a member of Bishop-in-Council, will seek to keep before our key governance bodies the vision of a sustainable Diocese. He is also in a position to build links between the work of the Commission and the ACC&C with its social equity focus.

3. Annual Cross Walk

The third project is ultimately about listening to Jesus' call to take up our cross and follow him. The cross walk was undoubtedly about trying something new and out of the box that would catch the public eye (and given the number of front page newspaper stories it generated, it actually worked!). The serious aim was to highlight the symbol of the cross in

order to focus people's attention on the message of the gospel – that Jesus is the risen King who has conquered death for our sake. However, it also gave me the opportunity to listen to the work of God's Spirit across this Diocese. I found it inspiring and spiritually uplifting to hear the testimonies of the many people I met on my walks through towns on the South Coast, Southern Tablelands as well as Canberra. It is for these reasons that I plan to do another Cross Walk next Lent, this time from Temora.

4. Alpha Courses

There have also been a number of important 150th year mission projects either led or undertaken by others and I would draw your attention to the upcoming promotion of a 150th Diocese-wide invitation to run a new Alpha program. The Reverend Margaret Campbell has skilfully taken carriage of this endeavour and it will begin – in force – following the 'Connect to Church' invitation on 2 March 2014.

5. 150th New Testament Distribution

By now I hope you have seen the special New Testaments which have been sourced from the Bible League and designed as a 150th birthday gift to the community from the parishes of the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn.

In May, 20 000 copies of these New Testaments were delivered by the Bible League to the Good Shepherd Anglican Church, Curtin who, under the leadership of the Reverend Guy and Mrs Sita Matthews, are kindly co-ordinating this project for us all. Already three quarters of these Bibles have been ordered, and nearly 16,000 have been delivered to our churches. Around 85 per cent of our ministry units so far have participated in the vision.

A number of parishes ran out of copies and have come back for more.

Although I am aware that many of you have received your orders, there will be a formal launch and commissioning of our Bible project ambassadors as part of the Cathedral service tomorrow afternoon.

My vision for this project can be summed up as 1-3-1-1: that every single member of the Anglican Church will pray for 3 people and give away one New Testament to them during the year.

Many individuals are sharing in this vision. Some have chosen to pay themselves for a box of 120 New Testaments on behalf of their parish. One rainy day a man arrived at Curtin on a bus from the north of Canberra in order to take a box back to his parish. Each box weighs about 17 kilos.

With Christmas activities coming up there will be plenty of opportunities to give away New Testaments. Please contact Guy Matthews to order your copies - \$60.00 a box. Guy is praying that his garage will be empty of New Testaments by the end of the year.

I would like also to thank Anthony Miller, Boyd McCarron, Jeremy Halcrow, Douglas Bucknell, Trevor Capps and Gill Varcoe for their energetic promotion over the past 2-3 years of the missional possibilities for this year, which many of you have taken up with inspired

creativity. What we are doing together in this year will continue to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God in the years that follow.

Part 2: Our Hope: The Light of Christ in Dark Times

We have been reflecting on the sort of Christian leadership that will provide hope in tough times. Both Paul in his letter to the Romans and our own ministry pioneers like Bishop Barlow provide what I contend is the right model: strong leadership when it comes to proclaiming with clarity the central orthodox truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, married to a respect for diversity of practice and a valuing of differences of opinion within the Church body.

But we cannot underestimate the darkness we confront. Our hope can not, and does not, rest in human leaders who are frail, prone to error and will ultimately fail us. So the Bishop's Dream that we be ***a diocese where the love of Jesus transforms individuals and communities*** does not primarily focus around the actions of myself as Bishop or the activities of the Diocese, rather it is a spiritual calling to open our hearts to the love of Jesus. Jesus talked about the love of God as a light in the darkness. *"...If we live in the light, as God does, we share in life with each other... if we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away."*

So an openness to the love of Jesus must include a mature theology of confession and reconciliation; an openness and transparency around our failings as a Diocese; and a commitment to walk in the light and flee from the darkness of our sins.

Professional Standards

The last 12 months have indeed been a sobering time in relation to Professional Standards. The most significant event was the announcement in November 2012 of a Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Assault.

The Royal Commission will continue to consume a significant proportion of the time and energy of Diocesan staff. I am currently expending around one third of my energy on professional standards matters. My expectation is that the findings will shake the churches to their foundations. This Diocese is not immune.

Beloved, this is an area where by acts of commission and omission on the part of members of the clergy and laity over many decades, we have, I confess, acted shamefully.

It is important we acknowledge past failings and the damage this has inflicted on vulnerable children and their families and the pain (and dysfunction) that has ensued. When the abuse was committed, the innocence and joy of childhood was stolen. For so many, their lives have been inexplicably damaged and as a diocese we need to take responsibility for that.

Over the recent decade we have implemented professional standards protocols, guided by policies implemented by the General Synod. But looking back before that time, the Diocesan leadership was acting without clear guidelines. Diocesan personnel may have been out of their depth when confronted by allegations. With the increase in awareness of

child sexual assault, especially since the late 1990s, we now understand that some of those historical practices may have further traumatised victims and their families.

Nothing we can do or say can ever give back what was taken from those precious children. However, as a Diocese there are things we must do to address, in some form, the wrongs of the past.

Firstly, if we are aware of any child abuse that has been perpetrated in our Diocese at any time, recently or long ago, we can make contact with Celia Irving or Peter Barnett, our immensely capable and dedicated Professional Standards team. Do also pray for Celia and Peter as their workload is significant.

Secondly, we can ensure that we do all we can to ascertain if there is information in clergy files where we received allegations of child sexual assault and any evidence of inappropriate responses by the Diocese at that time. To this end, I advise that every clergy file both current and in archives back to 1920, will be reviewed. This process is an incredibly time-consuming process, but one I believe is essential.

Thirdly, given what we now know about care of victims, we can ensure that we do all we can to locate the victims who had previously made contact with the Diocese where we believe the Diocese should have given a different response; and offer our profound apology for what happened to them, as well as invite them to share ways in which we may be able to assist them towards healing in their lives.

Fourthly, and this is for all of us, I call all of us to a time of corporate repentance. Please pray with me the prayer on the screen.

*Holy God,
you dwell in a high and lofty place
and also with those of humble and contrite heart:
humble us,
open us to receive your gift of contrition and repentance,
and the passionate will to live in holiness.
[Silence]
We do not ask for mercy for ourselves,
but trusting your mercy, we pray for your justice
for your little ones who have been abused by your church,
through what we have done, and what we have left undone.
In your sovereign grace and great love,
heal and restore,
in Jesus' strong name we pray. Amen*

Residential Aged Care

The words of that prayer are also apt as we reflect on the challenges this Diocese has confronted over many years in trying to deliver aged care services.

Tomorrow, Mr Trevor Ament and Bishop Stephen Pickard will explain in more detail the rationale for the decision to sell five of Anglicare's residential aged care facilities as going concerns to another aged care provider.

I am informed that the sale process is progressing well. Ernst and Young, who is managing the sale for Anglicare, has received formal expressions of interest from more than 30 aged care providers, with more to be added to the list. Over the next two months these providers have the opportunity to look at Anglicare's operations in more detail. By the end of October, it is expected that a short list of potential purchasers will have been developed for the consideration of Anglicare's Board.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Mr Ament, Bishop Pickard and Professor Ingrid Moses, Presiding Member of the Anglicare Board, for their leadership and wisdom in guiding this issue towards a resolution. It should also be noted that the work undertaken by the previous Anglicare Board in 2009 is assisting us now by providing the foundations and the framework for the comprehensive external review undertaken this year. I want to again acknowledge, as I have in previous Synod Charges, the efforts of former Anglicare CEO Keith Waters, the previous Chair of the Anglicare Board, Paul Baxter, and his Board colleagues from that period – many of whom continue to serve on diocesan committees and ministries. I hope they all know that I am deeply appreciative for the sweat and tears they expended in those years to confront Anglicare's challenges.

The move to sell was never an easy or straightforward decision. Not now and not in 2009. There were always a multitude of perspectives to hold in balance and as we now have the infrastructure, processes and opportunity aligned, the timing appears right.

This Diocese takes seriously its calling to care for the vulnerable frail aged in our midst, and many faithful members of our Diocese had invested time and money; sweat and tears, into building and operating our nursing homes over many decades. We need to celebrate these endeavours. Their legacy will lived on, even as the homes begin a new era managed by another provider.

That said, last year during the Ginninderra Gardens sanctions, I called together an Episcopal Working Group under the able leadership of Archdeacon-emeritus Anne Ranse to look at the key issues. Their very thorough and hope-filled interim report is available to this Synod – and you all have it on disc.

At the time the divestment of Anglicare's five residential Aged Care facilities was announced in June I wrote a pastoral letter which attempted to outline the two key factors we must always keep in balance as a Church – we must hold in tension our divinely inspired mission priorities with the humility to recognise our human capacities and limitations. This is what I wrote at the time:

“I have consistently said that part of the mission of this Diocese is to provide a ministry of love and support to vulnerable and frail older people in our community. However, this mission priority is undermined if there are gaps in our capacity to deliver truly Christian care. This is particularly true when the Church has the responsibility as nursing home operators. The solution is to explore partnerships and other alternatives to deliver best practice care while focusing on the spiritual dimension of aged care ministry which is the Church’s core competency.”

This Diocese will remain committed to ministering to our ageing brothers and sisters, not least through our Forrest Centre aged care partnership. The Forrest Centre is a unique ecumenical partnership between the Diocese and the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary, which also delivers community-based aged care packages across the wider Riverina region.

I am also heartened that Anglicare has been able to chart a sustainable path forward while retaining three supported retirement communities.

Aged Care Chaplaincy

Finally, this Diocese remains committed to providing aged care chaplaincy. The huge challenge of providing chaplaincy services to residents of aged care facilities is a key facet of the report to which I made reference. The Episcopal Task Force surveyed 31 parishes, identifying 71 aged care facilities within their boundaries. Projecting these figures suggests there are more than 100 facilities within the Diocese, a scale which should prompt us to see the importance of better structured ministry to these facilities. As the report states: “These people don’t deserve to be forgotten. Nor should their spiritual growth and nurture suddenly terminate because they are ‘put away’ in a facility.”

At this point, I want to especially acknowledge and thank all the clergy involved in aged care chaplaincy in our Anglicare facilities including the Reverends David Ruthven, Joy Harris, Lou Oakes, Morton Johnson, Robyn Moore, Jill Elliot, Wendy Bloomfield, Steve Clarke, Patrick Cole and Guy Matthews - for their wonderful ministry especially during this difficult period, caring for residents and staff at our facilities. In addition, we have been well served by a committed, selfless, team of volunteers who have given their all in the service and care of residents. Their efforts are to be applauded and as the abovementioned report states, we need to invest in these volunteers as their ministry is a tangible expression of Christ’s love for those in our care.

Most issues will be able to be clarified once we are in a position to announce the new aged care provider; including the exact shape Anglican aged care chaplaincy will take into the future. However, can I reassure you that the Diocese will continue ministry in these facilities?

For example, at Brindabella Gardens, I have already invited the Reverend Morton Johnson to continue as Anglican Chaplain. With the fundraising targets reached for the Brindabella Gardens Chapel, Anglicare will complete the new Chapel. Already, the foundations of the Chapel have been laid and the internal chaplaincy office has been built.

The ongoing use of the Chapel by the Anglican Church is being negotiated as part of the sale agreement. My expectation is that I will open and consecrate the new building as an

Anglican Chapel prior to Christmas and it will provide Morton with a base for his ministry into the future.

Anglican Diocesan Services

Not unrelated to the aged care decision, is the move to implement shared corporate functions between the Diocese and Anglicare. A new entity has been created called Anglican Diocesan Services (ADS) under the leadership of Mr Trevor Ament, which has resulted in efficiency savings for both Anglicare and the Diocese. ADS currently has about 50 staff providing a range of services including human resources, risk management, payroll, finance, IT, property, insurance, legal services, and fleet management.

With the creation of Diocesan Services, Archdeacon Matt Brain – with my blessing has accepted Mr Ament’s invitation to transition from Synergy Youth to Director of Parish Support, Chaplaincy and Mission. This role (in part begun under the ministry of the late Archdeacon Chris Short) will assist parishes and the various chaplaincies of the Diocese to access the missional resources they need in their advance of the Kingdom.

Audit and risk is another area set to benefit from the new arrangement. Marianne Cavanagh has been appointed on an initial 6 months contract as Risk Manager, Diocesan Services. She is beginning her work by analysing the raw data that Anglicare has already captured around its risk profile.

Marianne’s background includes 20 years working in corporate governance roles with public and private companies with a focus on constitutions; legislation; and compliance. More recently she worked with the Australian Reinsurance Pool Corporation, again in a corporate governance role which included risk management and internal audit functions.

As Risk Manager, she will be looking at all agencies across the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

Anglicare Leadership

The implementation of shared services will take some time to bed down properly. The implications for the remaining head office staff at Anglicare are still being worked through. Please pray for Anglicare’s management team through this time of significant change.

With Bishop Pickard taking up the position at the ACC&C, the Anglicare Board has appointed one of its senior executives Jeremy Halcrow, Director of Communications and Strategic Partnerships, as Chief Executive Officer. The Anglicare Board believes that Jeremy has the unique experience and skills required to guide the organisation through this transition period. It is important at this time that Anglicare is led by someone with strong relationships with key Diocesan staff, not least with the General Manager of Diocesan Services, Mr Trevor Ament. Furthermore, one of Jeremy’s key roles over the past few years has been driving the development of Anglicare’s strategic plan. The Anglicare Board has now tasked him to develop an evaluation mechanism over the next year in order to identify which programs are producing quality service and mission outcomes. This data will be required post the aged care divestment to guide the future shape of Anglicare.

Province of NSW and Tri-Diocesan Partners

Our wider Anglican Province of NSW is also experiencing a time of significant transition and challenge.

In the months of July and August I was Acting Metropolitan of NSW. This gave me a deeper insight into the issues facing our neighbouring Dioceses. Community expectations around the kind of professional management the Church must provide is being followed by the burden of increased Government regulation. And I must add, in most regards, tighter regulations in such areas as professional standards and child protection are thoroughly welcomed and justified. But all this means we must rethink the shape of parochial ministry, especially in those rural areas which have borne the brunt of population decline. Social changes are undermining the viability of traditional models, not merely of local congregations, but of whole Dioceses.

Looking across our seven Dioceses, there are significant 'gaps' in Episcopal leadership. Earlier this year both Newcastle and Riverina Dioceses failed to elect bishops – and the Grafton Synod has now entered its discernment phase. I addressed the Grafton Synod two weeks ago. Your prayer in these matters is most welcome.

Of most immediate significance to us are the issues facing our Tri-Diocesan partners Riverina and Bathurst Dioceses.

Due to internal rules within the Riverina Diocese I have been called on to assist in offering comment around their Episcopal election arrangements. I am hopeful that a resolution is close at hand.

Bathurst's financial issues have been well canvassed at previous sessions of this Synod. It has been publicly reported that Bathurst Diocese continues with debt issues. While the sale of the Diocesan schools in Orange and Dubbo to the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation has made a significant contribution to addressing this issue, I am advised by Bishop Ian that more work is required.

New Archbishop of Sydney and Cathedral Convention

It is due to the significant challenges facing the Province of NSW that I was especially heartened by the election of Dr Glenn Davies as Archbishop of Sydney. Glenn has the necessary experience of the wider Anglican Church to understand the role he can play in supporting all the NSW dioceses to fulfil our common mission *to be agents of the transforming love of Jesus*.

Indeed Archbishop Glenn had been for some time Canon Theologian of the Diocese of Ballarat, so he knows how to minister to our various traditions.

Archbishop Glenn will be speaking at our Cathedral Convention to be held at St Saviour's on January 18 and I do encourage you to take the opportunity to engage with him. I do not deny that Archbishop Glenn has different views on some key issues, not least the priestly ministry of women. However, we ultimately share a love for Christ. And the health of our Province requires us all to work at strengthening the relationships between our Dioceses.

From my point of view, it is important that Archbishop Glenn gains an understanding of our concerns around ministry and mission.

The Convention will also be an opportunity to hear from one of the Anglican Church's more dynamic Gen X leaders: the Reverend Dr John Dickson, Director of the Centre for Public Christianity, Macquarie University.

An Anglican priest and author of 18 books, John is known for engaging in dialogue through the media about Christianity.

The Anglican Communion and Covenant

My personal support for the Covenant has not waned and positive comments from parishes continue to filter through (following the distribution of General Synod study materials last year). With a great many Episcopal vacancies and Episcopal Election Synods in Australia, a change in the Primacy next year – and a new Archbishop of Canterbury – we do need to reengage in this conversation.

Can I invite you, in your regular intercessions, to continue in upholding Archbishop Justin as he seeks to be a balm and a salve to an increasingly fractured Communion?

Federal Election

1. Asylum Seekers

Given we have reached the zenith of the Federal election, it is timely to reflect on the conduct of the campaign. As Christians we should eschew simplistic slogans that diminish the humanity of others and simplify complex issues.

A number of Anglican Bishops have been outspoken during the election campaign around the asylum seeker issue, seeking a more compassionate response. On his election as Archbishop of Sydney, Dr Glenn Davies said that as part of his new role, he will reach out to asylum seekers, and reminded Christians that it is important to show them empathy. He said: "My concern is that often asylum seekers when they're in detention are unemployed... Part of God's gift is to be able to be creative and to do things. If you're just sitting in a detention centre, that's demoralizing and demeaning."

In Melbourne Diocese, there has been an organised advocacy campaign and Bishop Philip Huggins, who is Chair of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, and also of the Melbourne Anglican Social Responsibilities Committee, said that Australia has an honourable history of fully welcoming refugees from places of persecution and violence. Quite so.

When thinking about the asylum seeker issues I encourage you to be guided by three ethical principles (to which I have given voice across various fora):

- Firstly, generosity towards the refugees. The importance God places on showing hospitality towards the foreigner is a theme that runs through the Bible;
- Secondly, protection of human life; and

- Thirdly, providing asylum seekers with certainty as soon as practicable. Research has show that one of main causes of mental illness within detention centres is the long periods spent in limbo.

A satisfactory solution to the asylum seeker issues seems further away than ever. It is a much vexed policy issue and in my view a satisfactory outcome will never be reached until Indonesia, I would venture to suggest, is part of the solution.

Given the vulnerability of the asylum seekers and the fact that a solution appears beyond human capability, I fervently believe that this is a matter that desperately requires our collective prayer.

There are a number of other issues of national importance that have barely been mentioned as part of the Federal election campaign. I want to draw your attention to two of these.

2. Indigenous Reconciliation

I especially encourage our churches to actively support the moves towards Formal Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia's Constitution. The lack of this recognition remains a significant open wound in our healing as a nation. Many parishes will have opportunities to engage with the 'Journey of Recognition' that will arrive in Canberra next year.

Reconciliation is at the heart of our faith. As God's people we embrace this journey and the deepening of relationships that it brings. We therefore acknowledge:

- the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the history of our nation;
- the need for healing within many Indigenous families and communities within this diocese; and
- Gods Call to enable culturally appropriate and sustainable ministries.

In 2013 we celebrate the end of the first year of Anglicare's Reconciliation Action Plan (2012-2016) (RAP). Developed by Archdeacon Karen Kime, the plan was endorsed by the Anglicare Board and given life across the dioceses of Canberra & Goulburn and Bathurst.

Archdeacon Karen's work has led to scholarships being provided for Aboriginal students of teaching, medicine and theology. In addition, financial support has enabled Aboriginal young people at Broken Hill to attend a Christian youth camp on the south coast.

In Wagga Wagga the Ignite Indigenous Youth Mentoring Program earned the Reconciliation Award for excellence at the recent Anglicare Leadership Forum. Indeed, Reconciliation is now becoming part of the way in which Anglicare is both educating the wider public and reaching out more effectively to Indigenous Australians.

Elsewhere, over 30 locals and volunteers at Bega completed a workshop that assisted them to communicate more effectively with Indigenous Australians. Special guest for that day was Uncle Ossie Cruise, respected Elder and Pastor. This training has also been provided to a number of parishes that wish to outreach their local Indigenous communities. Parishes such as Wellington in the central west, Woden, Bega and Turvey Park have embraced such training.

Archdeacon Karen will also be representing us at the World Council of Churches Assembly which meets every 7 years and this November will gather in South Korea. She has been nominated as part of the leadership team for the Ecumenical Conversations that will take place, and will also be attending the World Indigenous Peoples Gathering scheduled to occur before the assembly.

3. Gender Violence

The issue of gender violence is one that is increasingly prevalent within Australian society and one that cuts across all sections of the community. This year, the UN Commission on the Status of Women, found that the emotional, physical and sexual abuse of women is rising and that the home was identified as one of the most dangerous place for women and their children to be. In Australia almost one in three young women and women over the age of 55 experience abuse. Further, it is experienced by Aboriginal women at a far greater occurrence than any other group of Australians.

The Anglican Communion and the Primates have called the Church to respond and bear witness to this issue. As Christ's Church we can no longer turn our back on the abuse experienced by women and children; we can no longer ignore the Gospel and its call for teaching and leadership at both the Parish and Diocesan levels.

Strategies such as the equipping of clergy and lay ministers; of naming the problem in preaching and teaching; of making worship a 'safe' place to be are all needed to address the issue of family violence. There are a growing body of resources across the Anglican Communion to help this happen, and within our own nation the development of 'home-grown' resources has begun. Importantly, each diocese is encouraged to develop a localized response to these issues.

Over the coming months, a Working Group will be established to advise us on the way forward; to develop strategies at both the diocesan and parish level and to identify suitable resources that can equip us to lead in these matters. I commend the members of this group and call for your prayers as they seek to serve us in the task ahead.

Closing Remarks

Despite the tough times we face, we can put our hope in our Lord Jesus. The love of God does transform individuals and communities.

Over the past five years I have been grateful to God for the ministry and fellowship of two colleagues, who this year were called to serve in leadership in other capacities in the Church.

In February, the Right Reverend Ian Palmer was consecrated Bishop of Bathurst. Bishop Ian had served for the previous seven years as Rector of Queanbeyan as well as Archdeacon of South Canberra, and as Archdeacon for Chaplains in this Diocese.

Similarly, Bishop Ian Lambert has been a great source of strength for me during my time as your bishop. As you are all aware, he was recently commissioned as Anglican Bishop to the Australian Defence Force. +Ian and Jill have moved to Canberra and as previously

mentioned will continue, in a more limited capacity, their engagement with us as a diocese. I look forward to +Ian's ongoing company and friendship.

Further, Professor Tom Frame is another colleague who has provided invaluable assistance to me since I arrived in this Diocese. His decision to resign as Director of St Mark's National Theological Centre before the start of the 2014 academic year will bring to an end a significant era for ministry training in this Diocese.

I have greatly appreciated Tom's leadership, insight, friendship and partnership in the gospel and anticipate ongoing Kingdom advances through his leadership of the Mulwara Anglican Mission District.

I feel it right to mention two other people at this point. The first is my dear friend and current Head of Radford College, Mr Phillip Heath. Phillip – who is also a loyal and enthusiastic member of Bishop in Council – is to take on the role as Principal, Barker College, in Sydney. I am so grateful to Phillip for his tireless service and fine Christian example throughout his time at Radford. I will greatly miss him.

The other person who has recently moved on from our diocese is the Reverend Trish Stuart-Smith. I want to publicly thank Trish and her team of intercessors for the time they have taken to pray for my ministry and to accompany me – where appropriate - on various missional assignments (such as my walk with the cross). Trish and her husband Peter have moved to Tasmania to establish the International Order of the Cross.

I have also been wonderfully served in this past year by a company of able and gifted colleagues. My Episcopal team comprising Bishops Trevor, Genieve, Stephen and Dean Phillip have been unstinting in their support and care, as have Trevor Ament, Dorothy Dashwood and the Registry staff, my E.O. Bev Forbes, our regional and portfolio Archdeacons (John, Karen, Matt, Paul, Bronwyn, Caroline and Anne), our very hard working Bishop-in-Council and again my long suffering and joy-filled wife, Jane. Thanks to so many of you for contributing to my Episcopal Appeal; your generosity has been a real fillip for ministry.

As we reflect on the past and look with hope to the future, we are working together to build a Diocesan culture that both has the confidence to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, but also respects diversity and provides space for different approaches. A vision of a 'mixed economy' Church.

I dream of - and serve within – a diocese where the love of Jesus transforms individuals and communities.

The Lord be with you.

Amen.

+Stuart
Bishop of Canberra & Goulburn
September 2013