

MINI CONFERENCE WITH BISHOP PETER:

TOWARDS THE REGENERATION OF THE DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH

I am both happy and grateful to be standing here today as your Bishop. Happy because I am actually enjoying the role and because I feel well fitted for the role. Grateful because a whole host of people have made choices over which I had no control which have seen me elected and appointed to the role: thank you. And thank you, again, to the many people here today who contributed so much in many different ways to the success of the ordination and installation services.

I love the church of God and I look forward to that great day when the church is again undivided. In the meantime, both by birth and by choice, my love for the church is focused on the Anglican Church and especially the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. More narrowly, I love the Diocese of Christchurch – an institution which has played a significant role in my life – marked, not least, by the fact that although I have not lived my whole life in this Diocese, it is the Diocese in which I have been baptized, confirmed, ordained deacon and priest, married, ordained bishop and likely will be farewelled from this life in! More widely, and warmly I love you, the colleagues God has called into the ministry of the Diocese. There is not one of you I would be happy to see depart from this Diocese.

When we talk about our love for the church and our love for each other, it begs the question what we think of ourselves as belonging to. Are we an “institution” or a “network of ministry units” or a “set of semi-independent congregations”? My own favourite understanding of the church, and of a diocese is that we are “family.” It is an understanding which is anchored into Scripture (especially into Ephesians), it is an understanding which affirms the importance of love for one another, and it is an understanding which fits with characteristics of diversity and unity within the one large group.

One emphasis I want to develop in the Diocese is an emphasis on being a Diocesan family. I won't say much about that today. I will likely say more in the Chrism Eucharists in Holy Week and also in my presidential address to Synod in September. But I am happy posing the question to you,

Are we willing to think about ourselves as God's family?

Quite a few issues and questions about ecclesiastical life are solved – in my view – if we think of ourselves as God's family.

Thank you for coming today. A significant reason for asking you to gather is that I want to say some things, quite a few things about the future of the Diocese during the period I envisage being Bishop.

Now, the period I want to focus on is 2019-2030. I will be Bishop for as much of that period as God grants me good health. A heading and sub-heading for this mini conference could be:

Towards the Regeneration of the Diocese of Christchurch: towards 2030.

Beginning Task:

each write in the space below what you would like the Diocese to look like in 2030 ...

then, write down what specific action you could take this year towards that vision becoming a reality ...

Introduction

Colossians, which we will turn to shortly,

- sets the Bible scene for talking about my vision, hopes and dreams for the next ten years.
- our future is founded on Jesus Christ crucified and risen; our vision is inspired by the universal rule of Jesus Christ; our faith in God and love for one another are fueled by the hope Christ gives us.

In respect of the church in the world today, the Anglican church is a Christian church which seeks to be the best of churches at least in this sense, never knowingly turning down the best of other churches, always open to learning from other churches, proud to be both catholic and reformed, comfortable including leanings this way and that, confident engaging with society around it, perhaps because of its peculiar heritage as the state Church of England.

I am positively Anglican – I hope you are too: wholeheartedly convinced that to be Anglican is the best way to be a disciple of Jesus Christ – a disciple committed to ministry of word and sacrament and a disciple committed to an ordered church around a bishop and guided by common prayer – our agreed liturgies.

The Anglican church is also a church which has survived and lives yet to tell its own tale. That tale includes the extension of the church to these islands, the founding of a new branch of the Church of England through missionary work.

We are the missionary church – te Hāhi Mihinare (the missionary church). It's time to go back to the future – and become that church again.

Can we be the best church in 2019-2030, including being alive and healthy, in Canterbury, Westland and the Chatham Islands? My answer is “Yes we can.”

Can we be that best church without rediscovering ourselves as te Hāhi Mihinare? No, we cannot.

I also suggest, “We cannot be te Hāhi Mihinare again unless we are also bi-cultural.”

My single focus for my episcopacy is on regenerating the Diocese of Christchurch. Why?

I am concerned that our long term trend as a Diocese is downwards in terms of statistics relating to participation in gatherings – Sunday worship services, other services, various groups – and I am concerned that with my own eyes I see many congregations of elderly people and certainly far more people aged over 60 than aged under 45.

Our total attendance figures for the past few years have been, according to our yearbooks:

	Total Attendance
2014	356,080
2015	351,448
2016	316,098 [a blip re counting?]
2017	336,155

Stephanie Robson's report, reflecting research of Kevin Ward, p.78, says:

“Churches that tried to do business as usual became increasingly irrelevant to people and to their communities. The churches that experienced the most growth were both orthodox and had adapted to social and cultural changes.”

In many and various ways, the Diocese of Christchurch has explored and implemented adaptation to social and cultural changes. We can salute and cherish our previous bishops, our predecessors in our own roles for the work they have done, especially in cajoling the Diocese into changes which were necessary but may not have been welcome at the time.

Yet, as we know, life moves on, 2019 is not 1990 (when Bishop David Coles began) and it is not 2008 (when Bishop Victoria Matthews began).

So, once again, we ask, with a new Bishop in place, what issues and questions arise as we reflect on the extent to which even a changing Diocese is doing “business as usual” and to what extent we have become “increasingly irrelevant to people and to their communities” while affirming the many ways in which we have experienced “growth”.

Our foundation for any and all such thinking should be in Scripture and thus I turn to Paul's Epistle to the Colossians.

Colossians

Colossian 1:3-6a

As we read Colossians, let's recall the world we live in. NZ society, local communities from Timaru to Tinwald, from Waimate to Waltham, and Cheviot to central Christchurch, is a mix of:

- secularism (life organized without reference to God),
- post-Christendom (attention paid to church as organized religion but more because it enhances much desired community life than because it offers eternal life and absolute truth; values of NZ society and communities remain strongly Christian with respect to values such as justice, mercy, respect for human rights, value placed on individual persons)
- resistance to Christian life (seems intolerant, narrow minded, unhealthy, weird, priests are abusers, etc)
- ignorance of Christian life (generation whose grandparents went to church but whose parents never made it beyond Sunday School)
- disinterest (so many things to do, so many websites to visit on smart phones)
- contentment (life is good for millions)
- society looks like the kingdom of God has come? (healing, housing, feeding, justice, knowledge, mercy ... church has contributed hugely to the modern world ... but to be in this kingdom does not require Christ)
- threatened way of life: climate change, mad rulers, inequality, migration transforming society

We could yet see a "return to Christ" but reality of mission today, re winning people for Christ, is slim pickings.

This is somewhat at odds with our passage, Colossians 1:3-6 which is about a growing, flourishing church.

Read Colossians 1:3-6

TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOUR: What did you hear in this passage? What was the main thing that struck you about that passage?

What are the hallmarks of the church of God?

- Classic theology: one, holy, catholic, apostolic church
- Colossians alternative, complementary:
 - o “your faith in Christ Jesus” (1:4)
 - o “the love that you have for all the saints” (1:4)
 - o “because of the hope laid up for you in heaven” (1:5)
 - “hope” is anticipation of a complete, death-transcending, never-ending life, filled with Christ and all the riches that belong to Christ, all of which is announced “in the word of truth, the gospel” (1:5-6)
- But Colossians conveys another presumption about the church of God – the church of faith-filled, loving, hopeful followers of Christ:
- The whole or universal church flourishes:
 - o “Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world ...” (1:6)
- The local church also flourishes:
 - o “... so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God” (1:6).
- Yet Paul does not take this presumptive hallmark for granted, at least not in respect of individual local churches such as the churches in Colossae and Laodicea (see 2:1; 4:16):
 - o Paul notes that the Colossians have “learned from Epaphras” what the gospel is, what the life of the Spirit is about (1:7-8);
 - o Paul tells his readers that he and his team have been “praying for you and asking that you may be filled ... so that you may lead ... as you bear fruit ... May you be made strong ...” (1:9-11)
 - o Paul tells his readers that their future in Christ is only assured “provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard” (1:23)
 - o Paul tells his readers that, in order to “present everyone mature in Christ”, he and his team, proclaim, warn and teach everyone, in a ministry of “toil and struggle with all the energy that [Christ] powerfully inspires within me” (1:28; see also 2:1).
- Always worth asking ourselves when we are not flourishing, whether we are praying, teaching, pastoring with energy and enthusiasm.
- But our situation today – attested I find, in conversations across many denominations – is that we in the Western world are all working and praying very hard yet few if any of us could write what Paul wrote about the flourishing of the universal and local church without some caveats.
- What should we do and how might we do it?
- I think we need to commit to being “steadfast” – to hanging in there – with lots of prayer – and some street smarts about the world we live in.
- Recently, at DMT (Diocese Mission Team), we shared four things which some commentators think are critical to the proclaiming of the gospel of Christ in a manner which will win a response.
- Or, we could put it this way:

There are four things we need to resolve about being the church in mission to a world we wish to win to Christ (just as was the case when Paul energetically preached the gospel for conversions and taught day and night so the converts would grow to maturity in Christ).

The church and its message today – some commentators argue - must be (in no special order of priority):

- **Institutionally ethical** (Colossians 3-4:6): “Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly ...” (3:5); “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt ...” (4:6).
- **Socially viable** (Colossians 4:7-17) “that he may encourage your hearts” (8); also: “the love that you have for all the saints” (1:4).
- **Personally effective** (As in, can we say: “my life is better for going to church”?) (Colossian 2-3) (faith and freedom): “... clothe yourselves with love ... let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts ... let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ... (3:14, 15, 16)”; “you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator” (3:10).
- **Intellectually plausible** (Colossians 1 and 2) (2:3: “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”; 2:8 “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to ... according to ... and not according to Christ.”).

Flourishing, regenerating church

A flourishing church is a regenerating church – a church replacing its generations lost through departures, ageing, or death.

Focus on regeneration because we are missing generations in many parishes:

- Children
- Youth
- Young adults
- Middle Age (40-60 year olds).

Talk “regenerate” because we will die if we do not regenerate:

- We have declined from 70 ministry units to 60 ministry units in the last decade
- I think we will further decline that number to 50 ministry units (as we currently understand them) in the 2020s
- In this next decade we will either stop the decline or it will accelerate faster.
- If we can stop the decline we might grow again in the decade afterwards. But if we do that, it will be from a “leaner and meaner” base. By 2030 a significant number of currently active Anglicans will be dead.
- This is not about saving the Anglican club from closure. **It’s about re-discovering our purpose as New Zealand’s Missionary church.**

Colossians speaks to us of obligations in ministry to serve Christ through preaching the gospel and leading converts to maturity in Christ.

Maturity means a full (deep, broad) understanding of Christ, his church and our place in Christ and in Christ's church.

If "Anglican" is to have any advantageous meaning, it must be that we believe that the Anglican way is one of the best pathways to Christian maturity.

We have many challenges before us if we are serious about working for the regeneration of our Diocese. Two have especially struck me recently:

- Many Anglicans in our city and region who are not engaged with our church families (I am meeting them, nearly every week.) How might they become as proud and excited as we are to be involved in our parish or other ministry context?
- Many Kiwis are disinterested in any form of organized religion. How might we interest them in the gospel (if not also in the organized church we believe is integral to the gospel)?

In other words, we have a challenge when we consider why as Anglican churches what we do is not connecting with self-identifying Anglicans.

We also have a challenge when we consider why what we think is the most important thing in our lives – our faith in Christ – is of little or no interest to the majority of people we meet in our everyday lives.

TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOUR: What is the greatest challenge, in your view, that your parish or ministry unit faces over the next 5 years?

WHAT THEN? Culture and strategy

Strategy 1: keep doing what we are doing and hope for the best.

This is a good strategy. It requires no additional effort on our part (and many of us are tired from overworking as we do what we do). It requires no change on our part, nor on the part of our congregations. It respects the wishes of many Anglicans that we acknowledge that what we currently do is the very best and most enjoyable way to be the church of Christ. It is also the strategy which is least affected by the principle I am about to remind you of!

Strategy 2: change what we are doing and plan for the best. This is a better strategy. Our brains tell us that. Our brains also tell us that it requires additional effort on our part and it is likely to be emotionally costly (because there will be resistance to change). Alarming, our memories will tell us two further disturbing things. First, that it will take a lot of meetings to work out what we need to change. Secondly, Christians rarely agree on any plan, let alone one which is intended to be “for the best.”

To be clear: I am not now and never will propose Strategy 1: keep doing what we are doing and hope for the best.

To also be clear: if Strategy 2 is to succeed it cannot be imposed from the bishop, there needs to be a shared recognition across the Diocese that we all need to embrace this Strategy. And “all” here means lay leadership as well as clerical leadership.

I need all of you. The Diocese needs all of you. I see the gifts God has given you.

I see your passion and commitment for the church.

We have everything in our church to see renewal come.

I want to be a bishop that releases the passions and dreams God has put on you, and uses the talents and gifts God has given you – to see more people follow Jesus with more of their lives!

I believe that we can get to the point where we embrace this Strategy. But heading in that direction is not our next step. Let me explain why.

You may be familiar with the mantra, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” (Originally said by a man called Peter Drucker, and often repeated since.)

I understand this to mean that there is little or no point in working on strategy if we do not first address our culture – the culture of the Diocese, the culture of our ministry unit, and so forth.

Culture as has been memorably said, including by Spanky Moore to a recent Clergy Conference, is “the way we do things around here.”

Culture is deep rooted in each of us.

When you clean your teeth tonight before going to bed, you will be acting on various rational impulses due to sound reasoning for cleaning your teeth, but mostly you will clean your teeth because that is the way you have lived your life. It is the way you do things in your home.

And, the way you clean your teeth, the time you clean your teeth, and the sequence of other things you do before and after you clean your teeth, will all be mostly due to the way you do things and have always done them.

If I tell you to do things differently tonight when you go to the bathroom, you might do them differently. Not because I am bishop and telling you what to do but because you might be sufficiently intrigued by something different to give it a go.

But here is the thing about the grip culture has on you: a week from now you will clean your teeth exactly the same way you did last night.

So, the culture of how we do things around here in the Diocese and in your ministry unit is a huge factor working unconsciously against making any change because we say that our strategy is going to change. (You can see why Strategy 1: keep doing what we are doing and hope for the best is very resistant to being eaten by culture because it makes the culture of the group the strategy of the group).

Logically, we should do some work on culture, on the culture which drives and shapes what we do, before we get down to strategic work – visioning, planning, implementing.

How might we do that?

- The “we” in the question is super important. Together we can make change. Separated and individualized we cannot.
- The way we do things around here, for Christians, for the church, is always under obligation to listen to the Spirit, to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church: are we listening and what is the Spirit saying?
- Colossians, along with many parts of the New Testament, reminds us of the big picture of what God would have us do around here: grow the church and engage with Christians on a journey to maturity.

If there is one aspect to our culture which I hope you will work together on, with each other, with me, it is this:

that we want to do things which assist the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ and we don't want to do things which inhibit that proclamation.

That is, I hope we are willing to ask the questions which challenge the way we do things around here:

- Are we doing what brings the Good News to people?
- Are we doing things which build barriers to the Good News being heard?

In a number of our parishes we do things which we are comfortable with, which suit us as the people who have been attending for the last twenty years, and which we react quite sharply to if someone such as a bishop or ministry educator or other outsider says, You are doing things which shut the outsider out of your club.

We will only stop those sharp reactions and we will only change the way things are being done around here if we ask ourselves these two questions:

- Are we doing what brings the gospel to people?
- Are we doing things which build barriers to the gospel being heard?

Ruthless honesty with these questions will bring a lot more cultural change than if the bishop or ministry educator or other external person tells you what to do. Remember: "Good Ecclesiology is a commitment to reality no matter what the cost."

When cultural change begins in your ministry unit and across the Diocese we can move on strategy with good hopes that we will embrace strategy.

TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOUR: share an example of when culture ate strategy in the life of your parish or ministry unit

KEY STATEMENT – the take home message I want you to take back to your ministry units:

We can and will regenerate ourselves if we reform our culture – if the way we do things around here changes so that new generations of Anglicans find their home in our Diocese.

Let's Imagine

We've got the cultural change underway, we have a strategy group strategizing, but the question arises, "What are the bishop's thoughts about what we are aiming for and how we might get there?"

Here are some thoughts, slightly mixed up, as you will see.

First Thought: we currently have 60 or so parishes. I estimate that 28 percent of them have something bubbling away which feels encouraging in respect of children or youth or both. What if, in 2030, we have 50 parishes, but 35 of them – 70% - have encouraging, inspiring work with children and youth?

Second Thought: across 60 parishes, a dozen or so chaplaincies, and counting the Dio Ministry Team, we currently have 72 ordained ministers, on part or full stipends. By my count 7 of the 72 are under the age of 40; that number rises to 12 if we go for all those under the age of 50. That is, 17%. What if, in 2030, 50% of our stipended clergy were under the age of 50?

Third Thought: we are quite traditional as an Anglican diocese in these ways:

- Every ministry unit is geographically bounded: parishes to parish boundaries, chaplaincies to schools, hospitals, police stations and so forth. Why do we have no ministry units which are not geographically bounded?
- We have Vicars and Priests in Charge, Assistant Priests and Associate Priests, Deacons and Archdeacons. But we do not have any licensed Missioner Priests. We have no Area Vicars or Area Team Leaders **that help us better share resources and wisdom to reach our areas?**
- Why do we still have no clergy specifically tasked with Church planting and pioneering new forms of ministry – like the UK has been doing for the past 10 years?
- There is some urgency about asking and trying to answer such questions, as I will explain shortly.

What if, by 2030, we had no parishes, but we did have a Diocese organized into a series of mission areas, mission districts, and several congregations based on common interests while being of no fixed abode? Likely we still have geographically bounded chaplains, but how many social media chaplains will we need?

This Third Thought does, of course, make a mockery of the numbers associated with the first two thoughts!

It should be obvious, however, that each of the thoughts above involves change to our culture.

It is a long time since the way we have done things around here is to ordain lots of young people. And our culture is such that when we emphasize raising up young leaders there are voices who react, concerned that we are neglecting the aged. Could that culture change?

What we need is a balanced eco system. It's not fair to expect frail people to do most of the heavy lifting. As a society we don't want to become like Japan – where they don't have enough young people so they just invent robots to do all the hard work. Indeed, robots won't help the church to be the church which is always about people!

If we want to increase the number of parishes with lively children and youth ministries, what financial help might neighbouring parishes, without such ministries, be prepared to give? That, again, for many parishes would be a cultural change.

As for abolishing all parishes and completely reorganizing the Diocese: well, that certainly isn't the way we do things around here.

Culture eats strategy for breakfast: what are you eating and what is eating you? If we are serious about regenerating ourselves as a Diocese we must answer that question and we must answer it before we begin discussion about percentages and goals and rearrangements.

KEY STATEMENT:

We can and will regenerate ourselves if we reform our culture – if the way we do things around here changes so that new generations of Anglicans find their home in our Diocese.

TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOUR: if you could change one thing about the culture of your parish or ministry unit what would that be?

Nevertheless ... I must say something about reorganization of the Diocese because some reorganization cannot wait till we are ready to reorganize.

Reorganisation in our Diocese

Let me be honest with you about something some of you in some parts of the Diocese know but perhaps others in other parts do not:

We are going to have to do some reorganization in order to respond to lack of growth, decline in worshipper numbers and deterioration in financial capability to pay stipends.

My particular regional concerns are for Mid Canterbury and North Canterbury.

In Mid Canterbury we have five parishes by boundaries but we can only sustain a full time stipend in one of those parishes. Reorganisational possibilities include radical talks with the Presbyterian Church and/or reducing our five parishes to three parishes. Even better could be to talk of one Ministry Area with appropriate sub-districts, but time efficient legislation towards this end could be challenging. One great advantage to reorganization in Mid Canterbury is that Ashburton is an obvious hub for the district and every current Anglican church in the district is 30 minutes or less drive from Ashburton. An opportunity we currently have is that there are several vacancies in respect of permanent appointments in this archdeaconry.

In North Canterbury we have nine parishes by boundaries but we can only sustain a full-time stipend in three of them. Reorganisational possibilities also include radical talks with the Presbyterian Church and/or reducing our nine parishes to four. We probably should talk about two Ministry Areas if we did away with parishes. One challenge for reorganization in North Canterbury is agreeing on the natural hub or hubs for the district. Should we have an arm wrestle between Rangiora and Amberley? An opportunity we currently have is that we have several vacancies in respect of permanent appointments in this archdeaconry.

Nevertheless, we are not a Diocese which is shrinking everywhere. We have growth points and we have parishes that, even if they are not growing in numbers, are thriving and flourishing. That raises the question whether we can reorganize ourselves for growth and flourishing. A fairly urgent conversation is underway, for instance, in respect of the Parish of East Christchurch, along with the Parish of Shirley – effectively the north eastern quadrant of Christchurch city. What might we do in this quadrant which mixes red zone land with new housing developments?

I acknowledge that some think we need some reorganization of the Anglican Centre and of our financing of administration in the Diocese. That is something we could talk about at Synod in September. But let me give you a spoiler alert: we have a bunch of very hard working people in the Anglican Centre who go the second and third miles for our ministry units, mostly for pay which is well below what an equivalent organization would pay.

Again, let me underline a major theme today: talk about reorganization is cheap; change to culture which allows and embraces reorganization is costly.

Reorganization, whether a response to decline or an application of strategy for growth, can only empower the church for a better future if the culture changes, if we the church are happy to do things differently around here.

TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOUR: what's one thing you'd like to change about how ministry and mission take place within your Archdeaconry?

Evangelism

When I preached in the Transitional Cathedral, on the day after my ordination and installation, I was fortunate to have three readings which tied brilliantly with what I felt should be said in the course of a weekend which began a new era of leadership in the Diocese. One of those readings was the familiar story told in Luke 5:1-11, in which Peter and his fishing mates take considerable persuasion from Jesus to cast their nets one more time. There was a big catch of fish, and Jesus told Peter and his mates that they would be catching people from now on.

I said this – slightly edited:

“Yet such realities [of decline in the Diocese] in the present time are at variance with the mission of Christ laid out in this event of an overwhelming catch of fish – an event which illustrates the expansive, universal heart of God.

In this passage Luke invites us to ask:

Are we joining with Jesus in great faith, believing that – even though the contemporary night seems long and the fishing to date has caught little – the best catch is yet to be?

A couple of years ago Stephanie Robson, now our new Ministry Educator, published a sober report into the state of our life as a Diocese. Let’s remember that “good ecclesiology is a commitment to reality no matter what the cost”.

In that report, Stephanie makes a very sharp observation about our tendency (in my own words) to avoid facing the double jeopardy of many congregations simultaneously reducing and ageing.

We are doing that avoidance, I infer from the report, on the basis of a vague hope that some new people might turn up, transferring to us from other churches;

or that a change in government immigration policy might one day lead to the recruitment of thousands of ready-made Anglicans from Africa.

No. Our hope should be directed to a different way of thinking.

If we are not to die as a Diocese, in approximately twenty years’ time, we must freshly offer ourselves to God to be part of an apostolate, of an evangelistic mission in Canterbury, Westland and the Chathams. We need to move from an institution into a movement. We need new converts. We need to be in the business of forming fresh followers of Jesus – (whether we breed them or lead them into to faith.)

A mission which seeks to draw new people into the life of Christ.

Only if this is our mindset will we be taking seriously the words of Jesus:

“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”

Ah, you may be thinking to yourselves,

“That is all very well, but isn’t Christ’s mission much more than evangelism? Doesn’t it include working for justice, seeking to meet the needs of the last, the least and the lost?”

Indeed, Christ’s mission is comprehensive, broad and far reaching and often it is better conducted by deeds rather than words.

But I will be failing in my obligation as the Bishop of Christchurch if I lose sight of the evangelistic mission of Christ and if I fail to challenge our Diocese to have the same mindset as Jesus himself had.

“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”

At stake is **not simply the size of the Diocese but the future of the Diocese** and its work in the mission of Christ.

In twenty years’ time, who will be available to reach out to the poor in our communities around the Diocese with the practical love of Jesus?

So what might we do, here and now, today and tomorrow? ...

When I returned to the Diocese not long after Bishop Victoria began her episcopacy here, I heard people saying things like this:

“Bishop Victoria has made it **cool to talk about mission.**”

That was and is brilliant.

Let’s keep talking mission.

Our challenge today, for the next ten years, at least, is whether we will all – together in Christ - make it cool to talk about **evangelism at the forefront of mission.**

“Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.””

KEY STATEMENT:

We can and will regenerate ourselves if we reform our culture – if the way we do things around here changes so that new generations of Anglicans find their home in our Diocese.

TURN TO YOUR NEIGHBOUR:

- Are we culturally geared for evangelism? That is, are we geared for seeing people who know nothing about Jesus at all becoming people who want to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do the things Jesus did?
- Is the way we do things around here that we are always looking for evangelistic opportunities?
- Do we act each day as though the future of our ministry unit depends on evangelism and not on transfer of other Christians from other churches?

Catch Up

What I am proposing today is that we commit ourselves as clergy in the Diocese of Christchurch to working through the period 2019-2030 aiming for growth and flourishing more than aiming to manage decline well.

There is and will be decline to manage well but our common bond through Holy Scripture obligates us to simultaneously open ourselves to the Holy Spirit leading us into growth and expansion.

Significant in such a commitment will be a commitment to change the culture ahead of engaging in a new strategic plan lest our culture eat that strategy.

Changes in our culture should include change to the way we organize ourselves and change to our outlook so that we consistently work for regeneration of our Diocese, including doing the work of evangelism.

If we cannot make this kind of commitment as clergy bound together in common tasks and outlook by our ordination vows, there is not much point in spreading the net to include lay leadership.

If we can make this commitment then our next steps, through Synod and Archdeaconry meetings is to spread that net.

There are other changes which will focus our minds on these matters which I will put to you after we have had a break for lunch ...

Finally, for this session:

We are in this together. We have experienced loss through this past year. We can choose, however, to be one family under God, open to the leading of the Spirit of God, and committed to loving one another, to not giving up on each other.

Following that lead of the Spirit will take different forms across our ministry units. We can choose to collaborate or to compete. I recommend the former! As creative energies of the Spirit are unleashed, may we thrive not just survive as a Diocese.

We are in this together. Let me leave you with this image. A Diocese and its bishop can be like a passenger train. The bishop is the driver, the clergy and laity are the passengers. Sure the train moves forward and it is going somewhere but most of the Diocese is passive and the bishop thinks he is in charge.

Or, the bishop and Diocese can be like a waka on the ocean. It will only go anywhere if everyone paddles together. It will only change direction if everyone paddles in that direction. Everyone is active. Let's be that waka.

KEY STATEMENT:

We can and will regenerate ourselves if we reform our culture – if the way we do things around here changes so that new generations of Anglicans find their home in our Diocese.

Session Two: Address Two

My thinking on matters I have some influence on ...

Everything in this section is open for discussion, feedback, better thinking.

Everything in this section is about our Diocese flourishing as a regenerated, rejuvenated Diocese

Ordination

Place of ordination:

generally, deaconing at the Transitional Cathedral; priesting in local parish

Formation at St John's College:

everyone will go to SJC for at least one year, unless aged over 55 in which case we will discuss what works and what does not.

Testing for Resilience and for Leadership (Pre Discernment):

We will be testing, looking for evidence of resilience and leadership skills and experience before we formally recognize a person is being discerned for ordination.

Licence as a Lay Ministry Internee:

I am keen on the idea that with younger people (say, aged under 30) I might licence them as "Lay Ministry Internee" while they explore vocation. No strings attached re ordination or formal discernment, but while so licensed a person might move from pre discernment to discernment for ordination.

Age: it will be rare for anyone over the age of 70 to be ordained while I am bishop.

Confirmation

I am committed to this sacramental action being offered in our ministry units (as per our baptism service).

It is an important opportunity for young people, transitioning from childhood to adulthood, to make a public commitment of their faith and to be prayed for by their bishop.

Age: my preference is for 16 years plus but I won't die in the ditch if there is a 15 year old.

Making parish appointments

I am experimenting with Edwin Boyce continuing to Chair the Board of Nomination.

All part-time or full-time, licensed permanent positions of Vicar or Priest in Charge will be advertised in the Harvest emails on Fridays.

Other positions (e.g. where a parish has a specific person in mind as an assistant priest; interim leadership positions) may or may not be advertised.

The general principle that interim ministers will not be considered for permanent appointment as vicar or priest-in-charge will continue but where a parish, having advertised, is unable to recommend an appointment be made from those applying, I will consider application from the interim minister.

In keeping with General Synod 2018 only those committed to the polity of this church will be licensed or given permission to officiate. There is no longer a place in this Diocese for new appointments where the appointees cannot guarantee that they will not agitate towards separation and disaffiliation.

Curacies

I would like to work towards placements of curates being finalized by the end of July, at the latest, each year for beginning at the end of that year or early in the next year.

To that end I will be seeking in February or March each year expressions of interest in a parish hosting a curate and the vicar or priest in charge being the training vicar for that curate.

This is the 2019 request for expressions of interest! We have two students graduating from SJC at the end of this year.

Diocesan Statutes

Many of our statutes need revising and bringing up to date with evolving practice or new civil law considerations.

We could spend the next 10 synods doing lots of revising and some matters won't be revised for 10 years.

Or: we could commission a small group to do the work of revision between 2019 and 2021 and then we have a single, extra synod, to pass all revisions in one session. Please think about this.

Communion

I am bound by the rubrics of NZPB so don't ask me about juice etc!

If – nevertheless – your parish custom is to make juice available, it must be GRAPE JUICE.

Generational Change re Leadership

I am delighted today to commission senior leaders in our Diocese.

5-6 years from now I envisage significant changes to senior leadership so that in the last part of my episcopacy there is a generational change in leadership.

Diocesan involvement in ACANZP

I am committed to our Diocese playing a full role in the Three Tikanga life of our church.

When I cannot represent the Diocese as bishop at various services and events it is my intention to ensure that one of our senior leaders (Vicar-General etc) is present to represent us.

Discipleship

We have a significant commitment within this Diocese to formal ways and means of developing discipleship through movements such as 3DM and now materials developed by Phil Trotter.

That commitment will continue: we must grow disciples who grow disciples if we are to flourish.

Very soon we will be announcing the appointment of a 0.3 FTE discipleship developer to work with Phil Trotter's materials.

Clergy Conference

You will have noticed that we are advertising a shorter clergy conference this year.

The "deal" however with the conference is that you are there for the whole occasion, 4 pm Monday to 4 pm Wednesday.

Some licensed lay ministers will be part of this conference: notably members of the DMT who in previous years have not been requested to be present for the whole conference.

(Clergy) Licences and Permissions to Officiate

In the medium term I think I will be recommending some changes to our Diocesan statutes re licences and permissions to officiate (PTOs).

In the short term I propose the following changes:

A new form of PTO called "Permission to Officiate Emeritus" which will be given to older clergy. It will grant permission to share in the ministry of prayer and reading of the Scriptures in services of worship with permission to officiate through preaching and presidency at the eucharist only in emergencies and under the direction of the vicar or priest-in-charge (or, in cases of the vicar or priest-in-charge being incapacitated, with the permission of the archdeacon). PTO Emeritus holders will not be gazetted as marriage celebrants.

Generally, in order to ensure that clergy voting at synod are voting for decisions they will then be part of implementing through their prime years of ministry, clergy will not be licensed who are over the age of 65 years, unless they have been appointed to be vicar or priest in charge or to a position of senior leadership in the Diocese or are within the first five years of being a newly ordained person.

(Lay) Licences

Could we please keep saying to ourselves that lay ministers do not need licensing where the vicar or priest-in-charge is directly overseeing their ministry (e.g. a lay person preaches when the vicar presides at communion).

Nevertheless there are lay ministers performing ministry without such direct supervision (e.g. in churches in a multi-centre parish, in rest homes) and such ministers should be licensed.

For the time being I invite applications for lay licences for such lay ministers. Applications should take the form of a letter signed by the lay minister and the vicar or priest-in-charge. The letter should include what ministry is proposed and what training has been received to date. Where I do not know the minister I may ask the local archdeacon to make contact with the minister. Licences will be issued for three years. Renewals will take place via the licence being sent back to the Bishop's Office, with an account of training undertaken during those three years and at least one relevant book being read, and then I will endorse the licence (on its reverse side) for a further three years.

Stephanie Robson and I, together with the Senior Leadership Team, will keep lay licensing under active review and clearly communicate changes to the Diocese.

Senior Leadership Team

- Strengthening roles of archdeacons: archdeacons are critical to the regeneration of the Diocese. They are our regional leaders (re geography) and ministry leaders (re deacons and chaplains). I cannot be everywhere and certainly not in two places at once and I will look to archdeacons to dedicate, bless and direct when I am unable to do so.
- A second bishop? We are the only larger Pakeha diocese that does not have a second bishop. That does not mean we should have one but it does beg the question whether we should have a look at having one. I would prefer that we do not explore this possibility for three years. If and when we do explore it, I will be very pushy that I would see a second bishop as critical to our apostolic and evangelistic mission, not as a person to share my workload.
- The Chaplain to the Retired Clergy, Spouses and Widows is now a part of the Senior Leadership Team. This is a signal that the ministry of our retired clergy, their spouses and widows are important for the overall functioning of the Diocese.

The Cathedral

- Every church and parish in our Diocese is important but the cathedral is special and I want to be clear with you about that.
- The Cathedral in the Square: we have made a synodical decision to reinstate the cathedral and I will do all in my power to uphold the integrity of our Diocese by working for the reinstatement.
- The Transitional Cathedral: I am very keen to find a way to fund, permanently, a second priest at the TC in order to free Dean Lawrence to be our Dean and to be a leading minister to our civic life in Christchurch.

South Island Bishops

- I intend to meet at least annually with the other South Island bishops and with them to work on aspects of our common life as South Island Dioceses.

Roles of Bishop of Christchurch

- There are many roles (I am finding) to the Bishop of Christchurch and it is going to be a challenge to be first and foremost a minister of the gospel and not be a member of many committees.
- One challenge I am setting myself is to see whether I can extricate myself from being Chair of CPT. Not straightaway, but eventually. At the least I think I will make the role of Bishop of Christchurch more attractive for my successor.
- (To be clear, I personally enjoy my engagement with CPT, but that doesn't mean it is the best use of my episcopal time.)

Co-operating Parishes

- With some clergy involved in co-operating parishes I am working on whether we could remove ourselves from the national co-operating parish network and responsibilities in favour of a local, Canterbury set of agreements with the Alpine Presbytery.

Property in the Diocese of Christchurch

- We have too many items of property, in my view, and as we age in many parishes it is becoming harder to form vestries to take up responsibilities for those properties.
- Thus my general mantra will be "let's sell" if the question is put to me.
- To be clear, I am not advocating for specific properties to be sold and I will put no pressure on parishes to do so where there is an active vestry to administer their properties.

+Peter

8 March 2019