

The Anglican Diocese of Waiapu Synod 17-18 September 2016

Bishop's Charge to Synod

Greetings and peace to you all in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We gather today in Rotorua for the first session of the 62nd Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Waiapu. A warm welcome to those of you who are here for the first time in Synod and also to those of you who have returned as re-elected representatives from your parish or ministry unit.

Witnesses to the love of Christ

In this Synod we gather as three houses, Bishops, Clergy and Laity, to come together at my request as Bishop so that together we may do the work of governing our church in this diocese. Anglicans in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia follow the order of church governance that was established by Bishop George Selwyn in 1859, at the first General Synod in New Zealand. We are a church that is episcopally led and synodically governed, meaning that the Bishop is acknowledged as the primary leader in the diocese and that the Bishop in Synod with laity and clergy governs the diocese as a whole. This is a work that is entrusted to us by the diocese as a whole and one in which we are mindful not only of our diocese, but also the wider province and Anglican Communion.

As we come together we represent the body of Christ, the church. We are sisters and brothers in Christ and the bonds we share between one another are the bonds of peace found in Christ. Please take a moment to be mindful of one another in this place. Consider those around you, some you know, and others you don't. Some you may agree with during the course of this Synod, others you may not. With all that in mind we remember that we are the body of Christ, our membership in Christ is through baptism and the nourishment for our faith through the celebration of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. We have these things in common and they are bonds that unite us together.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By

this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
John 13:31-35

Love understood through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection is at the heart of all we proclaim in our faith. It should be at the centre of all that we proclaim through the actions we display to one another. Loving one another when we hold a faith in Jesus in common with one another isn’t necessarily easy. We know that by looking at the struggles of the early church and the church in all ages. We face that now with our own disagreements in the province that cause us to consider how we will hold ourselves together as this body of Christ.

In the setting of this Synod I am inviting you to turn to one another and remember the words of Jesus to his disciples. “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” We have the potential and the directive to consider this time that stands before us over the course of this Synod to proclaim through word, thought and action, the promise and challenge set before us by Jesus ... to love one another and be known by that love.

I have been impressed by the expressions of love that I have seen throughout Waiapu in the past two years in moments when individuals with different views have been able to share and debate their differences with respect. This requires a keen depth of love, a depth that shows that love has penetrated to a deeper level within the individual and caused the transformation of heart and mind. Love compels us to turn toward one another in Christ. Love instructs us to behave in this way for the sake of the kingdom of God. Love requires of us, and enables within us, a willingness to be transformed. This doesn’t necessarily mean agreement but what it does mean is a sense of confidence in our discussions that reflects our understanding that our opinion, our thought, our perspective, our experience, while significant to us as individuals is held within a greater knowledge in God. In order to acknowledge this we must act with humility when we speak in order to leave space for others to be heard.

The peace of Christ be always with you.
And also with you.

Please take a moment to share the peace of Christ with those near to you.

Changing models of ministry

During this year’s Synod we will address two Bills that will complete a piece of work undertaken last year following the review of the Ruahine Mission. Last year we recognized the formation of two new parishes, Central Hawke’s Bay and Southern Hawke’s Bay, and this year we will formalize the changes to these parishes.

The experience of reviewing a model of ministry has highlighted to me that the models of ministry which will sustain the church and bring life to communities may well be different to those we have known in the past. Ministry, the life of the church in community, mission, the proclamation of the kingdom of God in the world, will look different in the future compared to what we have known in the past. Changing demographics of communities in rural and urban areas, combined with a growing age group of the baby-boomer generation will place before the church new challenges, and new demands for how ministry is expressed. I don't think that we have a reference point in the past that we can turn to with confidence to say, 'This is how we will complete the mission of the church in this setting.' I'm not sure that anyone does. So we find ourselves looking at ministry in places around Waiapu and thinking carefully about our circumstances, reviewing ourselves and building new visions for how we can be the church. This demands of us some pioneering spirit, a sense of confidence in the faith we have in God and a willingness to let go of the expectations of the past and try something new.

The model of ministry that has been developed for Southern and Central Hawke's Bay is one way of addressing the situation of that part of the diocese. It is early days for both new parishes and we will continue to learn what is required of us in those places to be a confident church. It is a model which may be effective in other places, but I have no expectation that it will be repeated anywhere in Waiapu. Rather, with each new review of ministry, I am encouraging parishes to approach the present with an open mind to what God might be calling us to be and do in the Holy Spirit.

The parishes of Hastings, Mahora and Riverslea are currently entering the early stages of review. This is the result of a series of conversations that began last year as parish vestries and clergy began to identify aspects of their parish life that caused them concern for the future. Concern, which I hope is not reflective of a lack of confidence in the gospel, but which is rather born of a desire to ensure that the ministry of the church is sustainable now and strong for the future generations of parishioners. While we are looking at current ministry units we also need to consider where areas of growth may be in Waiapu.

Walking in faith with confidence

One of the great challenges that we face as we consider review and possible change is the difficulty of facing our current situation in comparison to what we have known in the past. In many places in our church, not just Waiapu and I would suggest not just within Anglican communities, there are people who have strong memories of a vibrant history of the church from the 1950s and beyond. Growing up in an era where church attendance was widely a social norm and living through to the current era where attendance has declined is, I think, understandably challenging. The greater challenge is to avoid living with regret that what we experience in the present is not what we have experienced in the past and continue to live with hope for what God will reveal for the current generation. We need to be a people who

have confidence in our faith, in God's steadfast love for us and all the world, and confidence in the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide us as the church in the world. When we have confidence in our faith and maturity in our formation as disciples of Jesus Christ then our hope is not in what we have experienced in the past, but is securely placed in the God of our salvation. Rather than looking at the world we know with anxiety, let us stand with the confidence of our faith and seek a deeper experience of God.

Confirmations

In the past year I have rejoiced at each opportunity to preside at services of confirmation and affirmation of faith throughout the diocese. These services have provided an opportunity to bear witness to people of a wide spread of ages who have desired to make a public declaration of their faith and have that witnessed by the church. Of great interest to me in the services are the moments when candidates for confirmation have the opportunity to share something of their faith journey. These reflections often tell stories of people who have journeyed deeply to come to the place of seeking confirmation, for others who have sought confirmation from a journey where they have been surrounded by encouragement and steady growth. Each story is a valuable expression of discipleship. I encourage you all to promote the opportunity for confirmation in your parishes and consider making that offer to parishioners well ahead of the next time I am scheduled to visit your parish. Take the time to offer good preparation and if you're looking for support with that please ask our Ministry Educator, Reverend Deborah Broome, for help.

Diocesan Committees

Last year in my charge I identified four areas that I believe require development to assist the Standing Committee and Waiapu Board of Diocesan Trustees with their governance responsibilities and by extension be of assistance across the diocese. The four committees I proposed were Property, Ministry, Statutes Revision and Communications. I want to provide a brief summary of where that work has got to so far. It is a mixed bag of success, some of which I am disappointed to report.

The Property committee remains a work in progress and discernment. While conversations at the Waiapu Board of Diocesan Trustees have been productive on this matter we have begun to realize the extent of the scope of work that may be required of such a group. It is a little overwhelming at times and more work needs to be put into drafting the terms of reference for such a group before we can look at establishing an effective committee.

The Ministry Committee has been established and has begun its work in the diocese. The committee has developed beyond the temporary membership of me with the Regional Deans supporting the Ministry Educator, to now be a group formed of laity and clergy from across the diocese. Their work will support the Ministry Educator and the development of education initiatives across the diocese. The committee will also provide suggestions for developing

policy on ministry matters for Standing Committee to consider. The first major initiative of the committee will be a review of lay ministry and lay training requirements across Waiapu. This work is underway now in its preparation stages and will be a work of the committee across the diocese in the coming months.

The Statutes revision committee is also just in its infancy of development. This committee will rely on people with the time and relevant experience to assist the Standing Committee with their work. There is some level of urgency to develop this committee to assist the work of Standing Committee on behalf of Synod and the initial piece of that development is about learning from the experiences of other dioceses to help guide our work.

The Communications Committee has not been formed and while at one level I am disappointed to report that to this session of Synod following the interest raised last year, I am not dismayed. There has been a great deal of work undertaken across the diocese in the past twelve months and while this has slipped in the order of priorities, there are signs of possible partnerships with communications and marketing students that could be of great assistance to this committee, once formed.

Governance across the Diocese

In my first year as Bishop I held several meetings for parish wardens to offer them some support in their roles in our parishes. At the time, while those meetings were effective, I also realized that there was potential for a greater level of support to be offered to Parish Vestries, Ministry Leadership Teams and Clergy in the area of good governance. In the past year I have seen several examples of situations that have arisen in parishes that have required a level of governance that has not been in evidence, which, has led the parish, vestry or clergy into difficulty. I recognize that this is an area that we all need some assistance and training in from time to time and so I am committing myself to provide that training in the coming year to clergy, vestries and ministry leadership teams.

There are also some aspects of our diocesan governance that I would like to explore in the coming years to see if we can improve our ability to govern well with the demands of the changing needs of our local parish communities. While these are only ideas in conceptual form at the moment I have been considering two ideas in particular that would have some effect on our Synod.

- 1) An increase in the number of laity representatives from each parish, from one as it is now, to two. It is quite a common practice among other dioceses in our province to have this share of lay representation alongside licensed clergy of the diocese. There are considerations that would need to be discussed such as whether parishes could sustain having two lay representatives at Synod, but equally it offers an opportunity for more lay participation and opportunity for passing on the baton, as it were.

- 2) A reconfiguration of the membership and selection process for Standing Committee. The changes I have been considering are to have a Standing Committee membership of ten people, six of whom would be elected by the first session of each Synod, and up to another four members who would be co-opted by the Standing Committee to balance matters such as skill set, theological background, governance experience and so on. That list is incomplete but gives some indication about how selection may be based. The rationale behind this is to provide a model where good governance is achieved by having a mixture of elected representation and appointed skill set to meet the demand of the committee. This is a model that the Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki have employed in recent years.

These ideas are still very much conceptual in nature which is why I haven't formalized them any more than as I have described them to you now. During the coming year it would be my hope to work with the new Standing Committee to develop this thinking further, and if the ideas are considered worthwhile to present a Bill at next year's Synod in order to enable changes prior to the first session of the 63rd Synod in 2018.

Acknowledgements and thanks

I would like to conclude my charge this year by acknowledging the many people who have contributed to the ministry of the office of Bishop in the past year. The administration and finance team which is led by the Diocesan Registrar has continued to impress me with their ability to provide a high level of service to our diocese, ensuring that our business complies with what seems to be an ever increasing level of issues each year. This year I have had the pleasure of having a full complement of members in my Bishop's Staff Team; Diocesan Registrar, Colleen Kaye, Regional Deans, Revs Adrienne Bruce, Stephen Donald and David van Oeveren, Ministry Educator, Rev Deborah Broome. I meet with this team each week via video conference and then monthly face-to-face for a day. This provides me with an important opportunity to hear first hand the concerns, developments, opportunities and stories of the diocese through this team. I cannot be everywhere in this diocese, nor even as available to you all as I might hope, but through my team you can be assured that if you share a concern, an idea, an inspiration, an issue, it will be discussed with me and often developed with the wisdom and experience of the whole team.

I would also like to acknowledge the various Trust Boards that have various authorities delegated to them by this Synod. The Waiapu Board of Diocesan Trustees, chaired by Michael Morgan, give considerable thought and careful attention to matters of property, finance and investment. I appreciate their attention to detail and the experience that they bring to the church. The board of Anglican Care Waiapu (Waiapu Anglican Social Services Trust Board) has been very diligent in their work over the past year. We will hear from the board chair, Mr John Palairat, on the board report during this Synod. There will also be an order of the day set down for Sunday morning following the Synod Eucharist when we will move into conference

mode and hear a presentation on the proposed sale of the residential aged care facilities. The presentation will be followed by a time for discussion in small groups, then the board members present including myself, will be available to take questions of clarity and hear comment. The full consultation process will conclude with opportunities for written comment to be sent to the board by 7 October. I'm sure that many of you have come keen to have the opportunity to hear more about this possible sale and that session will allow us to begin that work together. The board have worked beyond the demands of responsibility that are ordinarily placed on them while they have addressed this offer of purchase on behalf of the diocese, and I am appreciative to John and all the board members for their care, diligence and prayerful governance on our behalf.

I would also like to acknowledge our Standing Committee who has stood in the place of Synod when the Synod was not in session during the past two years. This year we see some members stepping down and look expectantly for others to take their place. For those who have served and who continue to offer to serve, I offer my thanks and appreciation. Our work together is important and you have been patient with me as I have settled into the role of Bishop in Standing Committee meetings. I value your input and debate. I have enjoyed the respect with which you have addressed one another and the concerns we have shared. My deep appreciation to you all.

A final thanks to all who were involved in the organization, support and hosting of General Synod/Te Hinota Whanui held in Ahuriri in May this year. It was a privilege for us to be the host diocese this year and to assist the General Secretary and Primate in their preparation for the hui. A highlight for me was being able to stand alongside our tikanga Maori partners in Hawke's Bay as we welcomed the GSTHW members to Ahuriri. Those tikanga relationships are very important and that act of joint hospitality and welcome was a poignant display and reminder of the relationships.

Final comments

Finally I would like to acknowledge the support that I have received from many people around the diocese. Your prayerful support of me, and my family, is deeply appreciated.

May God be with you all as we meet in this Synod,

May God bless your hearts and minds with a vision of love so unencumbered by fear that you can proclaim the gospel with confidence.

May God bless you with peace and courage and so inspire your discernment and decisions.

And may God the three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you now and ever more.

Amen.