



Presidential Address

Nelson Diocesan Synod 2008

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This presidential address to Synod comes in a time of great uncertainty for the Worldwide Anglican Communion and yet a time of great opportunity. It is our sesquicentennial year – 150 years as a Diocese in this top third of the South Island.

Just as I begin – I'd like to deviate for a few moments. Fifteen years ago I had the privilege of working with a very special man who would take my ideas and dreams and, if he believed God was in it, he would work tirelessly to ensure that dream became reality. A few months ago I realised that our 'sesqui' was coming up and saw the opportunity to work with the community in the celebration of these 150 years. That same man is alongside me once again and as I shared the dream he saw the potential. And again he has worked tirelessly to make it happen. He has built a fantastic team around him but I want to personally acknowledge my deep respect and gratitude to that man, my chaplain, Canon Mark Chamberlain.

2008 has provided a wealth of material from which I could reflect and comment. However, while I will refer to the statement from 'GAFCON' and my own experiences at Lambeth I believe that God is calling us to use this time in our history as a Diocese to take a deep breath and commit ourselves to the journey he has planned for us. And that is the motivation that is guiding these thoughts today.

But I do need to put them into the perspective in which we find ourselves.

Lambeth.

The Anglican Communion remains as fractured as it has ever been. Despite the attempts of the ecclesiastical spin-doctors to paint the Lambeth conference of Bishops as a triumph for the Archbishop of Canterbury, nothing has changed. The powerful Episcopal Church seems as determined as ever to continue to pursue a revisionist agenda despite the comments made by Archbishop Rowan in his closing address to the conference. And they seem equally determined to shut down those who are committed to biblical orthodoxy. Just in the last few days the Convocation of Bishops voted to depose Bob Duncan, the Bishop of Pittsburgh who has consistently challenged the Episcopal Church to return to Biblical orthodoxy. At the other end of the rope there are those Provinces who have 'taken over' pastoral responsibility for Dioceses and parishes within the Episcopal Church in The United States and the Anglican Church in Canada and who have absolutely no intention of abandoning them.

The one hope lies in the adoption of a Covenant which will lie in the hands of two critically important gatherings next year: the meeting of the Primates that has been called by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council. If this covenant is not strongly ratified – and if there is no clear mechanism or commitment to 'enforce' it - then I would predict the breakup of the Communion as we know it. Even if it is ratified there will also be changes, because it seems likely that individual dioceses may be able to opt into this covenant relationship, if the provinces to which they belong choose not to.

The bottom line for me is that I struggle to remain in communion with provinces that constantly challenge the reality of the resurrection or deny the divinity of Jesus; or provinces who feel the need to apologise to other faith traditions for our Christian evangelism; or with presiding Bishops who believe that Jesus Christ is simply 'one way among many.'

GAFCON.

Just prior to Lambeth the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) was held in Jerusalem. I felt I couldn't go because of the time commitment and so Standing Committee invited my Vicar General, Archdeacon Robin Kingston, to attend on behalf of the Diocese.

The final statement of GAFCON is a precise and positive declaration of the faith that I believe we would strongly affirm within this Diocese. But – and without wanting to influence the debate we will have later in Synod – I do have some concerns about the authority that has been vested by GAFCON in their 'Council of Primates': particularly the cultural authoritarianism that one or two of these primates work within and form their ministries upon. I am very keen to see what might come out of a Global South that is expanded to include some of the powerful evangelical leaders from the UK.

These two events will continue to have a profound impact upon the Anglican Communion and upon us as a Diocese.

Global Economy

On a Global Scale we are watching the collapse of major financial institutions as the debt crisis finally comes home to haunt us. Billions of dollars have been poured into a rescue package which will simply prop up a system which, at its heart, is deeply flawed. While New Zealand may be shielded from the worst of this crisis we are certainly not immune to it and it will continue to have an impact upon our economy. Coupled with the massive fuel price rises over the last few months and the rising food prices many people are struggling to make ends meet.

In Acts 2:42-47 we see the picture of a Spirit-filled church 'selling possessions and sharing the proceeds with those in need.' Compassion, Simplicity and Generosity were marks of this church and need to be marks of our church today.

A few weeks ago I had quite a dramatic vision that has stayed with me. It was a picture of churches in every corner of the Diocese digging up their glebe land and spare corners of the church property, planting vegetable gardens and giving away the produce. If you'll forgive the pun, I've planted the seed – if it was a vision from God let's see if it flourishes.

The Anglican Church here at home.

The Anglican Church in New Zealand, like most denominations, is experiencing decline. We might not be in the freefall situation that one or two are in, but the census statistics present us with a challenge that we would be crazy to ignore. It is easy to argue that numbers attending church are actually increasing and that the census decline simply reflects those nominal 'members' who are now being a little more honest about what box they tick.

Our own Diocesan Statistics don't back that up because they record actual attendance and have shown a decrease over the last few years, in contrast to the growth during the early 90's. We are certainly not in a critical situation but we need to make sure that we don't simply bury our head in the sand and hope it will all just somehow come right. Christ has called us to build his church and to grow God's Kingdom and in this Diocese we will continue to take that responsibility seriously.

This takes energy and focus and here at home it's been a long, wet winter and many of those in leadership – both ordained and lay – are feeling tired. The emotional resources needed to just keep the parishes financially sustainable mean that there is little energy left to plan and to grow. I believe that this is a major issue that we need to grapple with as a Diocese.

Human Sexuality – the ongoing debate.

Finally, in these preliminary words, I need to address the 'gay issue' because it continues to be a source of controversy and division within the church. I want to simply say that the constant reference to a 'gay issue' is very unhelpful from both a missiological and a theological perspective. Our church doors are open to each and every human being, that they might experience the saving grace and the transforming love of Jesus Christ. No-one is excluded – all are welcome.

However I do think with have an issue of sexuality because our society has a crisis of sexuality that it seems incapable of addressing. Casual sex, multiple partners, same-sex relationships, extramarital affairs, teenage promiscuity, fetishes, are all acceptable in a society that is driven by a culture of individual rights and personal freedoms that have been raised to the level of moral absolutes.

We believe that the biblical pattern – God’s perfect plan – for our human sexuality is a man and a woman united in marriage, or alternatively - celibacy. And here, in this Diocese, that is the expectation for those seeking or exercising leadership, lay or ordained within the church. And in that affirmation we are doing nothing more than restating resolution 1:10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference of Bishops which was reaffirmed by the Archbishop of Canterbury at this Lambeth.

Looking ahead.

With all this in mind I want to cut to the chase and look ahead to a new year and suggest five key qualities or themes that I believe will be crucial to our growth and development. It is my sincere hope that decisions made by this Synod or decisions made by the Standing Committee that we elect will be guided by – or have reference to - these themes.

When Archbishop Harry Goodhew was elected Archbishop of Sydney in 1993 he outlined a five-point slogan which summed up his vision for Anglican ministry.

- Observably God’s people
- Evangelistically enterprising
- Pastorally effective
- Genuinely caring
- Dynamically Anglican

It is very tempting to simply take the Archbishop’s five themes but I am going to pinch his last one and make it my first one. It was the one that made him somewhat infamous at the time and caused many to smirk because even then it was considered something of an oxymoron – a contradiction in terms.

Dynamically Anglican!

I think that we struggle with a sense of identity; ‘who we are’ in God’s plan of things. What is it that makes us uniquely us and gives us a sense of confidence? We have tried to imitate what other newer churches and denominations are doing in a deep desire to be relevant. As I said at our leadership conference on worship:

I have a strong sense that in our desire to keep up with contemporary ‘trends’ in worship we have settled for mediocrity in our worship forms and styles. We have tried to inject a Pentecostal ‘praise and worship’ event with a little of our ‘Anglican reserve’ and have created a service that doesn’t quite ‘hit the button.’ Or we have tried to tamper with liturgy in ways that totally destroy any sense of flow – and therefore – any sense of satisfaction.

We have responded to the requests of those who worship with us, baptising adults by full immersion one moment and babies by sprinkling the next. One week we will dedicate the child of someone who has come to us from another denomination where this is common

practice, while baptising the baby of some nominal folk the following week. We reduce the number of communion services we offer just in case some people think we are becoming 'too Anglican!' – or it's become the thing we do first thing in the morning to keep the 'oldies' happy before getting into 'real worship.'

We take the name 'Anglican' off our church notice boards. In some cases this has been a deliberate choice but in many instances it is an unconscious desire to distance ourselves from any association with the actions of the wider Anglican Communion which we believe to be a barrier to our mission. And in other cases 'Anglican' has been understated in order to remove any sense of belonging to an institution in an age that is very wary of institutions. All of this is totally understandable, but what it has done is leave us floundering around for a sense of identity.

So what does it mean to be 'Anglican?'

It's about having one foot in the reform tradition and another in the sacramental – a faith that speaks to both head and heart. It is about patterns of worship that are inherently Trinitarian, soundly theological and bathed in scripture. It grows disciples who understand praise and silence; confession and celebration; the transcendent and the immanent. Anglicanism brings the three-fold order of Bishops, Priests and Deacons into a democratic church system in which the responsibility is shared by both ordained and lay. While taking leadership seriously it offers a structure of both support and accountability. I could go on but what about the qualifier that Harry Goodhew used – 'dynamic' Anglicanism?

Dynamic, dynamite, dynamo – all come from the Greek word 'dunamis' which means 'power.' It is the word that Jesus used in the first chapter of Acts when he told the Apostles to wait in Jerusalem and that 'when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power (dunamis) and will tell people about me everywhere....' 'Dunamis' was what separated the church in Acts 2:42-47 from the church as described in Acts 1:14 – 26. Here they were just going through the motions. They were gathering together for prayer and for teaching. They had their formal meetings and elected their new leaders (all sounds very Anglican to me!) But then came the feast of Pentecost. They had gathered together – as was their custom – and the power of the Spirit came upon them and the life of this early church was transformed from a fledgling organisation into a movement that would transform the world.

Dynamic Anglicanism takes the strength of our tradition and heritage and allows the Holy Spirit to breathe his life into it.

I'm fed up having to feel I need to apologise for who I am.

It is dynamic Anglicanism that has given us Alpha.

It is dynamic Anglicanism that has given us New Wine

Soul Survivor has grown out of Dynamic Anglicanism

Dynamic Anglicanism is growing dramatically in many parts of the world – but most especially in South East Asia and Africa. Three new Dioceses have just been created in Hong Kong.

I think that in the early 90's we were dynamically Anglican – and the Lord added to our number daily those who were being saved. But then somehow, somewhere along the journey we dropped the torch. I suspect that in our desire to grow stronger theologically we let the pendulum more toward the Word and away from the Spirit as if they are two distinct realities. Dynamic Anglicanism has nothing to do with either/or when it comes to Word and Spirit but embraces both/and. I want us to reclaim that balance.

And that leads into my second theme:

Balanced Spirituality.

We are told that a healthy life is a balanced life. We ensure that we have a balanced diet and a balanced pattern of rest and recreation. And I think there is a spiritual parallel – a series of biblical dualities that we get out of balance far too often. And I want us to strive to be a church that gets the balance right.

There are several of them including:

- Word and Spirit
- Grace and Truth
- Justice and Righteousness
- Faith and works
- Transcendence and Immanence
- Praise and worship

I want to focus on two or three only this morning and I am probably influenced in my choice by what I experienced at Lambeth and have observed within the Anglican Communion.

Grace and Truth.

From the prologue to John's Gospel:

'The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.'

Grace and Truth.

I wish I had the time to tease these two concepts out theologically because they are not as diametrically opposed as we have tended to make them. They are actually very closely related – they are the two sides of the one coin and were both essential attributes in the person of Jesus. But when I consider the way we flesh them out within contemporary Christianity I get a sense that we tend to swing one way or the other.

At the risk of a sweeping generalisation I would say that there is a perception out there that the evangelical church is deeply concerned about the 'truth' and the voice of grace is strangely silent; a graceless Christianity where the liberating truth of Christ is stifled because of the Spirit in which it is proclaimed. Whereas the Liberal Church loves to talk about Grace, but echoes the voice of Pilate when he asked 'what is truth?' It's a wishy-washy Christianity that embraces everything and challenges nothing. Hearts are not changed, lives are not transformed and God grieves.

There are many reasons why 'Liberalism' has gained a dominant place within the Anglican Communion but I am firmly convinced that one of the main ones is the inability of evangelicalism to be united. The lack of grace means that suspicion is alive and well in evangelical circles internationally and it's alive and well in this Diocese. In Jesus there is no conflict between grace and truth. In fact I would say that theologically, the truth of God is Grace! Rather than debate that now I want to challenge us to get the balance right and to understand that for a missional church, grace is the means by which people experience the truth.

Justice and Righteousness.

'Justice' was one of the buzzwords at Lambeth. If we heard it once we heard it a thousand times. And of course it is within the framework of Justice that the issues of human sexuality are discussed and debated. One whole day of Lambeth was given over to the theme of Biblical Justice and the next day – as a response – the Bishops and their spouses marched through London in support of the millennium goals; goals that every single Christian would want to say 'amen' to.

We were in our Indaba groups and had just watched another video about Justice and the group was beginning to discuss it when one of the Sudanese Bishops stood and voiced the exact words that had been going through my mind. "Why do we talk so much about Justice and never mention righteousness? Why the silence?" And no-one answered him.

In the Old Testament these two terms often appear together – again, as two sides of the one coin.

The Lord Almighty is exalted by his Justice. The holiness of God is displayed by his righteousness.'

(Isaiah 5:16)

'Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of righteousness will be peace and the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence for ever.'

(Isaiah 32:16-17)

'Let Justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.'

(Amos 5:24)

The Hebrew word in these passages cannot be adequately translated with one English term – it is much deeper and broader than any one word that we might have. And so it is translated as both justice and righteousness which is the closest we can get to it. The Hebrew word is strongly connected to relationship – particularly the covenant relationship we have with God. There is no understanding of Justice and Righteousness outside that relationship.

The Hebrew concept implies a life lived in a covenant relationship with God in such a way that our thoughts and our behaviours etc are a reflection of his teaching and we see people

and situations through the eyes of God and we respond accordingly. If you like it visually, Righteousness is the vertical and Justice is the horizontal dimension of the same concept. They can't be separated and it is unbiblical to do so. Yet the church insists on talking about Justice and never mentioning Righteousness. It's a little too hard because righteousness would give a different perspective on some of the issues the church would want to discuss as justice.

As we sat in our Indaba groups and watched this video, the presenter – a highly respected and influential woman within the international communion – suddenly said 'Jesus encouraged us to 'hunger and thirst for justice.' And I wanted to cry out at that stage, "No he didn't! He asked us to hunger and thirst for righteousness!"

And, as I mentioned at the beginning of this section – there are many other dualities within scripture. Authentic Christianity gets the balance right. Let's make sure we do.

Dynamic Anglicanism, balanced spirituality and the third theme (an echo from my charge to Synod last year) is Missional Discipleship.

Missional Discipleship

I dedicated my whole address to this theme last year, but it is important to include it in this charge because 'discipleship' is to be our major focus for 2009. It preoccupied my thoughts last year as I became more and more concerned at the growth of a wafer-thin Christianity that has far more in common with the desires of our consumer culture than it does with the challenges of the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus' 'great commission' found at the end of Mathew's Gospel commands us to go and make disciples.... The first word is a kind of missional imperative all on its own: Go! There's no sense at all that we're to just sit around hoping that people will come to us. The command is to go - and make disciples.

I summed up my charge last year with this one sentence

'Missional Discipleship seeks to grow disciples who are passionately involved in, and engaged with their society and their culture, but whose lives radiate increasing Christ-likeness that is markedly distinct from the individualistic consumerism of our prevailing culture.'

I hope that we might be a little more intentional next year than we were this year in making this our major theme. The Bishop of Oxford, John Pritchard will be speaking on the theme of discipleship at our leadership conference just prior to our final 150th event at the end of April.

The fourth theme is Inspiring Leadership.

I have never made a secret of the fact that this is one of my driving passions because I believe that we have a leadership crisis in the church. The Anglican Church in New Zealand is experiencing the consequences of several decades of second-rate theological education at a national level and those of us who survived and grew through it are the exception rather

than the norm. Several key evangelical parishes around the country are now looking for vicars and they are struggling to find them. The last two Episcopal electoral synods in New Zealand have chosen from overseas. Our inability to produce inspiring leadership is a litmus test to the state of health of the Anglican Communion. And that deeply concerns us as a Diocese. There are two dimensions to this theme this morning.

Firstly, the identification, training, equipping and resourcing of new leaders.

As we gather as Synod this year Bishopdale Theological College is coming to the end of its first full-time year of operation and present with us, as a member of Synod, is our Dean of Studies Rev Dr Tim Harris. The development of a College of Theology here in Nelson was a huge leap of faith from Synod and yet we took it with the belief that this was God nudging us. You wanted those responsible for the initial planning to show that we had a sizable trust behind us. We came back last year and said, we haven't, but we believe we have enough to begin. You were a bit nervous, but you said okay. A few weeks ago I had a strong sense that God was saying that this is going to be a feature of the College. We are not going to be richly endowed because he wants to keep us on the cutting edge together - constantly recommitting ourselves to this vision and soaking it in daily prayer because its existence depends upon it.

We set Bishopdale up as an independent Trust, reporting to Synod. But as we have progressed through this year we have recognised the critical importance of the College to the life and vision of the Diocese. It is my plan for Bishopdale to have total responsibility for ministry formation within the Diocese and the Rev Dr Peter Carrell is working with the Dean of Studies to facilitate this. It comes at a time when the Dean is also seeking to move Bishopdale more toward a seminary model that integrates teaching with the reality of ministry rather than the College model that sees theological education as an academic pursuit separate from ministry. But Tim will share more of this when he speaks to the Bishopdale report later in Synod. So Bishopdale College is the tangible sign of our commitment to new leadership for the church.

Secondly, we have a desire to be more proactive in the encouragement and support of our existing leaders.

This Diocese is so blessed to have the leaders that it does. The week after our return from Lambeth Hilary and I opened our home to any clergy and spouses who wanted to come and hear about our experiences – a kind of debrief. About 30 people packed into Grove St and scanning the room I found myself profoundly moved as I looked into the faces of the ministries represented there.

Early in this report I said that ministry is tough. And it's lonely. And so this coming year we will establish a professional development program that will help guard those in full-time ministry (both lay and ordained) while at the same time helping them feel both supported and extended.

It is a three-part program comprising personal supervision, peer-support and a two-yearly ministry appraisal. This program will be a formal requirement in all new contracts and a prerequisite for any clergy applying for development grants from the Diocese. But my hope is

that eventually all will opt into it voluntarily, both for their own health and safety and also for their own personal growth. I don't want to go into more detail at this stage – that will be shared with those in ministry. But I will just add that the Bishop's ministry team intend to lead the way on this one – beginning with me.

Fresh Expressions.

Last weekend I was given a reality check. A long-standing member of this Synod took me to one side and said "Richard, unless we do something radical, we have no future." And the painful thing is, I agree with him. Tinkering with the engine can be futile when a whole new vehicle is actually needed.

*Watch a few stories from 'expressions: the dvd stories of church for a changing culture'.
Published by Church House Publishing*

So my final theme is 'Fresh Expressions' – the challenge and commitment to finding new ways of being church – planting new models of church instead of – or alongside - our existing models. This may be threatening to some of you who sense that some of our traditional forms of worship will be the first to be ditched in the relentless pursuit of the fresh and new. But generally speaking this is not the case. 'Fresh Expressions' does not have an either/or mentality but rather a both/and. It respects the old while exploring the new.

A 'fresh expression' church is not a traditional church that has a creative outreach programme to the kids at the skate park – in the hope that they might be drawn into the discipleship programmes run in the church. It is a ministry planted in the skate park that gradually develops forms of discipleship and worship that are relevant to that environment. It might be a cell church or a cafe church or cyber church – church on the internet. The one thing it will have in common is the desire to reach out to people, unreachable within our current structures of church. It is a natural extension for a missionary Diocese.

It will have an impact upon us if we continue down this journey because it will involve the appropriation of already scarce financial resources. However it is actually nothing new in this Diocese. We had a fresh expression some years ago with the development of what was called the Waimea project. But somewhere along the journey we wimped out and went back to the old familiar model.

Next year I would like to set aside several opportunities for members of Synod to gather with me to study the book 'mission-shaped church' in the hope that we might have some exciting new proposals to discuss here in this forum next year. If we can do that then maybe we too can lay claim to be dynamically Anglican!

But above all I believe we need to pray.

- Pray that God will have His way in His Church:
- That we will be alive to hear His voice and respond to his leading.
- That we might have courage to change what needs to change.