

2023 Archbishop's Address to Synod

Welcome everyone to the second session of the 45th Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide.

As we gather, I acknowledge that we meet on the land of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains, and I acknowledge and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs, and their relationship with the land. I acknowledge the impact European settlement had and continues to have on the first peoples of this land, and we continue to seek and pray for reconciliation.

As we gather in the safety of Adelaide, I am very conscious of the many people in the world who are not in safety this morning. We continue to pray for an end to the invasion of Ukraine, the fighting between Israel and Hamas and the civil war in Sudan just to name a few. So many innocent lives being impacted so much peace needed.

The meeting of Synod got off to a good start last night at St Augustine's and I thank the parish for hosting us. Thanks also to Bishop Keith Dalby for preaching and for the 'band with no name' for leading the music.

The annual meeting of the synod is a good opportunity to look back over the past twelve months and look forward to the next year. In preparation for this address, I re-read my 2022 synod address and was reminded just how busy 2022 was. There were many big things that happened. The last twelve months have had fewer big things, but many important developments.

As we think about the past twelve months it is clear that while Covid 19 is still with us, it feels like the community recovery from the pandemic is underway. I think something similar can be said for the Anglican church in the Diocese of Adelaide. Parishes took a real knock during the pandemic, and some haven't recovered in terms of the number of people involved, but parishes are trying things again. Parishes are beginning to look outward again and that's fantastic to see after several years of just trying to survive as best we could.

I found reading the reports from parishes in this year's reports book encouraging and I hope you did too. Parishes were asked to format their report around the priorities of the Diocesan Vision statement, and on the whole that was what was done. To see the variety of activity happening in the churches of the Diocese is really great, and a cause for thanksgiving.

When I came to the Diocese just over six years ago, I invited the people of the Diocese to join me in praying for growth in four areas of our life. They were growth in the numbers of disciples of Jesus; growth in the depth of our discipleship; growth in no strings attached service offered to the community; and growth in generosity in the way we use the gifts and resources God has given us to look after. I continue to pray for growth in those four areas and I can see signs of that growth in the activities of the churches.

Given that, we do have to be honest about our situation. Most of our churches did take a numerical knock during the pandemic and some have not recovered. But that was in the context of a steady decline in attendance over the past four or five decades. Some of the churches of the Diocese are growing numerically, but the overall picture is ageing congregations and declining numbers.

Roy Moran in his book *Spent Matches* quotes Jim Collins in his book *Good to Great* describing a meeting with Admiral James Stockdale, who was the highest-ranking US naval prisoner at the Hanoi Hilton, the North Vietnamese prison for American military during the Vietnam war. When Collins asked which prisoners didn't survive their long ordeal, Stockdale said without hesitation, 'optimists'. Stockdale told Collins, 'You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they may be'. Roy Moran says, 'this is a lesson, now referred to as the Stockdale Paradox, church leaders need to learn (p.4).

Moran goes on to say: "Pointing out the truth regarding the church is often deemed critical, negative and unspiritual. Therefore, Christians tend to spin brutal facts in a positive way. Being positive and encouraging is certainly an attribute to be desired, but when it masks reality, we become like Stockdale's optimists' (p.4).

Given we don't want to be like Stockdale's optimists, there are a number of facets to the reality of the church as we experience it today. The first part of the truth regarding the church is that the church is the Lord's church with Christ as its head. Second, Jesus' resurrection guarantees that the kingdom or reign of God will come. We pray that it will come soon. Third, the Lord continues to call people into relationship with him, and to inspire people to love the poor.

Fourth, we are the body of Christ and we have been given the vocation through our baptism to share in the mission and purpose of God. The mission and purpose of God is to bring about that state of affairs in the world known as the kingdom or reign of God. That state of affairs has been described as- the healing of creation (Hans Kung), the world put to rights (NT Wright), the healing of all things-the world, its peoples, the planet itself (Baker and Ross); the recognition of God's reign and its implications experienced. That is God's purpose or objective, or mission, and the church is called by God to share in that mission.

The fifth part of the truth is the brutal part: much of the Anglican church in this diocese is numerically shrinking. We are ageing and many of our buildings because of lack of maintenance are in poor condition. Of course, numerical strength in itself not necessarily a sign of godly growth. If you did the Lectio365 devotion on Tuesday morning this week, you'll have heard the comment:

More isn't always a sign of growth. You can grow in influence, have lots more people, more money, more buildings-but if you haven't grown in the presence of Jesus among you and in His love for the poor, then what you're talking about isn't healthy growth at all. It's just swelling. And swelling is what happens when something is infected or broken.

I certainly agree with that, but on the other hand a loss of capacity to share in God's mission through decline or distraction is not something to sanctify.

My reflection is that the parish reports, the activities of the Diocesan Council, and my own knowledge of the diocese indicates commitment to the mission of God is renewing and refreshing. But we cannot think we will participate well with God in God's mission if our focus is just to keep the doors open, or protect our bit of property, or keep doing what is comfortable and routine for us.

We are honest about the situation but not despondent or without hope. This is the Lord's church, and only the Lord of the church will grow the church. Our task is to participate as best we can. That's got to be our key and focus.

The question for each church in the Diocese to answer is, how well are we focussed on sharing God's mission? Whilst there might be signs of a renewed commitment to God's mission, we need to keep building that momentum. The brutal truth can act as a prompt to positive action not a reason for despair or defeat.

Vision

At the meeting of the synod last year, we welcomed the refreshed vision statement which is: Adelaide Anglicans Flourishing and United in God's love. Four areas of focus were included. They are first, growing in discipleship and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Second, connecting in and with communities. Third, advocating and working together for social justice. Fourth, caring for Creation and for each other.

The way our diocese is organised via its Constitution and Ordinances means that most of the effort to make the vision and its focus areas a reality rather than just a dream happens in the churches of the Diocese. Neither I as diocesan bishop nor the Secretary of Synod can direct the parishes of the Diocese in terms of their activities to any great degree.

The Diocesan Council as the standing committee of the synod can do a bit more, but even then, really the parishes run their own operations with most of the initiative coming from them. There may be a feeling sometimes that the bishop runs the show, but that's not the way things actually operate. There are some things that we have done as a synod to serve the whole and I will highlight some of those in a few minutes, but the action really is the with the individual parishes. I cannot make parishes do anything. I cannot close parishes and I cannot open parishes without the agreement of those involved. I actually cannot command or require parishes to do anything much.

This is not a bad thing. In fact, It is a good thing, and I think it's an Anglican feature which seeks to keep a fine balance between what could be called a congregational organisation, and one which the bishop runs as if the diocese belonged to them. It also emphasises the grass roots, and ultimately the Anglican church is a grass roots movement.

One thing our polity highlights is the importance of the ministry of the whole people of God. It is not the case that the clergy do the ministry and the people of the church support the clergy. All are called to minister, all are called to share in the mission of Christ through our baptism. The ordination of priests service includes these words: 'Our Lord Jesus Christ summons us all to obedience and discipleship. In baptism we are called to be a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God, to make Christ known in the world' (APBA p 793).

Bishop Brad Billings in his excellent book *'Truly Called? Vocation in the Anglican Church'* says this:

for the person of the Christian faith, it is fundamental that the primary consideration in regard to the question of "What should I do with my life?" is, whatever I ultimately choose to do, even if that choice is somehow made for me, must be capable of serving the mission of Christ. This can occur in almost any context and in all manner of ways, for all of life is discipleship and, therefore, a life of applied Christianity, broadly defined (p9).

The term 'lay' as in 'lay man', or 'lay woman' has taken on an unfortunate meaning more like 'amateur' or 'not trained in' or 'without a detailed knowledge of'. So, the lay people of the church are seen as somehow second-class ministers. But the Greek word which is translated laity (laos) means the people generally. All the people of God are called through their baptism to share the mission of Christ. A very small number of the laos will do that in holy orders as deacons, priests or bishops, but the vast majority of the laos will serve the mission of Jesus in other just as important ways as they live their 24/7 lives.

Ministry doesn't mean what the ordained do only. It means service. The people of God serving the mission of God in the power and at the direction of the Spirit of God.

One of the challenges for us is to have some more people in the Diocese being clear about what the mission of God and therefore the focus of the church is.

Mission

An important feature of the past twelve months has been the introduction of a course called *Mission Shaped Introduction*. This six-session course comes from an organisation called Fresh Africa and reflects the *Mission Shaped* research of the Church of England. Lynn and I have now run the course three times around the Diocese, and Bishop Tim has led it once with two parallel groups especially for St Matthews Kensington and people from the Eastern deanery.

So far, a fairly small number of people from a variety of parishes and have done the course in order for it to be introduced to the Diocese, but the next step is to have the course run in as many parishes as possible with as many people participating as possible.

I think Mission Shaped introduction could really shape our diocese in a very positive way. The course talks about the purpose of the church. It talks about the importance of living as disciples of Jesus and how we nurture that discipleship with a rich spirituality. It talks about our core task of making disciples of others and shaping our church communities to have a disciple making culture. It also talks about the importance of listening to the wider community so as to serve it in the interests of proclaiming in word and deed the coming kingdom of God. And the course invites churches to shape what they are doing to more effectively share God's mission and make disciples of Jesus.

This is basic stuff. I have said before that if your parish is clear about its purpose and is engaged with Gods mission, making disciples who make disciples, and serving the wider community, in other words, if your parish is missionally humming, you probably don't need MSi. But if it's not, MSi is an easy to use, inexpensive and invigorating tool. Ideally a church would do the MSi as a precursor to a mission action planning exercise. After all, it's not much point having a plan that doesn't reflect our core business.

The first session of the MSi course is especially helpful. It introduces three 'ologies'. Theology, or what is God like; missiology, or what does God want to do, what is God's project or purpose; and ecclesiology, or what should the church be like in terms of its structure and activity, so it aligns with its theology and missiology.

The 'ologies' are defined. What is God like? MSi sees that God is love as expressed especially in the life death and resurrection of Jesus and summarised in John 3.16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life".

What is Gods project or mission? As I said earlier the kingdom or reign of God. That's what God is on about. That's Gods mission or project.

What is the purpose and shape of the church? The church exists to serve to partner with the triune God in bringing God's kingdom to come, and we need parishes and the Diocese to be shaped to effectively do that.

MSi makes plain the importance of getting the order of the 'ologies' right. God comes first. From the character of God flows God's mission because God's mission is an outworking of God's character. And the church exists not for its own sake but to serve the mission of the God of love. The church must be shaped and set up and focussed on serving the mission of God.

If we don't get the order of the 'ologies' right, then we end up with the church not living out what its God given calling is, and therefore not focussing on the right things. God will still bring the kingdom to fulness, but the church won't be doing what it is called to do, and risks being left behind.

The discussions that are part of MSi, if they are shared among the decision makers and influencers of the parishes of the Diocese, have the potential to reshape and reinvigorate what we do. Let me repeat that. If parishes in the diocese are open to exploring God's mission for their context through MSi there is the potential to reshape and reinvigorate what we do.

But critical mass is important for change with any group of people. Critical mass in terms of the number of parishioners who participate in discussions and decision making. That's why it is important that as many people as possible in a parish participate in the course.

The feedback from those who have completed the MSi has been generally very positive, and I am aware that the course is going to be run as a Lenten program at Somerton Park and Warradale next year.

Others though may have done the course or heard about it but might be wondering how to run it in their parish. To assist with this, in March next year I will be running a two-part program with a very inventive title-How do I run MSi in my parish? Those two sessions will provide an introduction to the material, and some practical help in actually running the course. Part of that program will also be some help in implementing the implications of the course. In other words-so we have done the course, what is the next step? That two-part instruction to leading MSi will happen on the afternoons of the 6th and 13th of March. More information and registration will be available early next year, but I really encourage church leaders to come along.

As we continue to reflect on the 'what's next following MSi?' question I am planning to hold a one-day workshop early next year which will look at some of the missional models which are being developed in Australia and overseas and look at some examples from our diocese where new ways of connection with the community and outreach have been tried. I haven't got a date for that yet but will have in the next few weeks I hope.

Our vision statement as a Diocese is: *Adelaide Anglicans Flourishing and United in God's love*. The MSi course may well be part of helping us flourish. The course will be good for existing parishes, but one of the things it talks about is starting new communities which are especially focussed on reaching out to people who are not part of any church and probably aren't Christians yet. There are a number of names for this. Some call it church planting. Some call this action fresh expressions. Some, missional communities. They can be small initiatives or larger ideas. What is important is being open to the Lord's leading.

The discussions involved with MSi will really help existing church communities be better focussed on what the church needs to do. That's giving a missional edge to existing churches which will be fantastic. But we need to be thinking about starting new communities of faith. There are large swathes of new communities especially in the north of the Diocese that have no Anglican presence at all. And we need to see what we can do to begin the process of starting missional communities in those areas.

We need to be investing in the North in ways that will help us share in God's mission in that part of the diocese. A motion is coming in that regard which I hope we feel we can support.

I said earlier that most of the effort in realising the vision comes from parishes. But there are some things we can do and have done as a synod, that is, us acting together. For instance, Kat Pugh began this year as clergy well-being co-ordinator. Caralyn Lamas began in April this year as the co-ordinator of the learning community, and we are currently recruiting for a Flourishing Parish Communities Facilitator who will be based in the bishop's office and will have the task to assist existing parishes to flourish and assist new missional communities to begin.

On April 20 next year we will be running a one-day diocesan conference for all the people of the diocese at St Peters girl's school. We are calling this day-For the Love of God and it is aimed to be a day of encouragement and teaching. We will have a key-note speaker and also workshops on a number of topics. Planning is still under way, but you might like to note that date in your diary. Saturday April 20. I want to thank the organising committee for their work on this-Caralyn Lamas, Sophie Relf-Christopher, Bishop Denise and Lynn Smith.

Collaboration

I have said in previous addresses to Synod that it is very important for churches to work together. Working together is important because increasing compliance requirements and decreasing volunteer capacity mean that it is getting harder to run the small businesses, we call parishes. Working together is also important because small stand-alone parishes, even those with a fully stipended clergy person find it almost impossible to do what is necessary to be a flourishing church.

As I think about it in order to flourish a church needs to be offering good worship, opportunities for evangelism and for enquirers to discover the Christian faith, opportunities for church members to grow in the depth of their discipleship, ministry to more than one generation, and connection with the wider community so as to serve at least some of its needs.

This is a full program even for well-resourced parishes, but it is really difficult for small parishes to do by themselves. So, what tends to happen is that most of these things don't happen. I think it's a very hopeful sign that parishes are now talking to each other more and more. That's great. Parishes don't need my permission to do that. You have it, and my encouragement.

I want to highlight two different examples of co-operation in the diocese. The first is cooperation between Warradale and Somerton Park which has been underway for nearly three years. That is a situation where the two parishes have remained two parishes with two parish councils and have effectively shared two stipendiary clergy. It's fair I think to say that there have been some bumps along the way with this one, but also very fair to say that this cooperation is reaching a very positive stage. I thank the parish leaders, lay and ordained, for their persistence in this project.

The second example is a merger between Golden Grove and Modbury parishes into the new parish of Modbury-Golden Grove. These two parishes did not have to merge. They could have continued on as they were. They chose to merge because they could see the ministry advantage being bigger with more ministry resources could have. This is the first example I am aware of two parishes that weren't forced by financial straits to merge to take that step. I congratulate the leaders of the parishes for a very positive process and outcome.

Of course, structure doesn't lead to success. There have been examples in the past of cooperating parishes and mergers, but the only ultimate outcome was delay in decay. That's because on its own structure is neither here nor there. If we merge or cooperate and just keep doing the same thing and expect a different outcome, we will be disappointed. We must operate as a network of missionary units and not a collection of religious clubs. We must be faithful to our calling to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. That's got to be our focus.

We need to be helping people to share their faith and make disciples making disciples. We need to be offering opportunities for people to grow in the depth of their faith and knowledge of the faith. We also need to be ministering to multi generations. We need to be connecting with our community and looking for ways to bring God's healing wholeness to those communities.

If a parish is not doing these things the question is why not? If the answer is: 'we don't have the resources', then part of the solution may well be work with another parish or two. Part of the solution could also be talking with Caralyn Lamas of the Learning Community to get some help.

Well-Being

One of the areas of focus of our Vision is caring for creation and for each other, so the past twelve months has seen the extension of the clergy well-being program as part of our responding to that focus.

Since we last met Diocesan Council has, at the instigation of the General Synod following the recommendation of the Royal Commission into institutional response to child sexual abuse, authorised three policies for clergy and stipendiary lay workers.

These are mandatory pastoral supervision, ministry reviews and professional development. I am pleased to say that the take up of pastoral supervision has been excellent with, I am informed, 97% of people covered by the policy reporting that they have a supervisor. Theoretically of course the figure should be 100% since it's a mandatory policy, but I have to say the result is very good and not just from a compliance point of view.

The real benefit is that the vast majority of our licensed stipendiary clergy and lay workers are receiving pastoral supervision which has been shown to be really important for well-being and flourishing. That's the point and benefit and good news. The review and professional development requirements will be rolled out beginning at the start of 2024 and I expect they too will contribute to flourishing and well-being.

There is still work to be done in the clergy well-being arena. One of the areas that concerns me is whether clergy are getting sufficient time off, and it's not just time away from ministry responsibilities, but time off at times that allow good connection with family and friends.

Ordained ministry can be isolated and isolating. On one hand clergy deal with and mix with and talk with people all the time. On the other hand, for parish clergy, it's not always easy to have friendships with parishioners because boundaries get blurred, and roles get muddled. Add to that the fact that many clergy move from community to community and sometimes city or town to town or state to state, and there can be an experience of moving away from friends and family. This does not assist with human well-being and flourishing.

The ordinances of this diocese stipulate nothing really in terms of working conditions for clergy and that's because as the status of clergy ordinance says, clergy generally are defined as 'office holders' not employees. The exception perhaps may be clergy who have signed employment contracts as chaplains but those will normally stipulate work hours.

For clergy who are office holders there are no days of work or hours of work prescribed, nor are there provisions for annual leave or days off. This for good reason. The ordained life is seen as that-a life, and individual clergy organise themselves to fulfill their ministry responsibilities and have the benefit of flexibility as they do that.

Over the years, probably a long time, the custom has developed for the clergy to have one day off a week. One period of twenty-four hours away from their ministry responsibilities. This is not officially recognised in the church law of this Diocese but probably grew out of the injunction to have a sabbath day each week. Six days shall you labour and do all your work but the seventh is to be a sabbath to the Lord.

The problem is that can be interpreted as having only one day a week away from ministry responsibilities, whereas it probably should be better interpreted as having at least a day off, not only one day off. That's certainly the point of the commandment. The notion of sabbath is really important. A day of rest and refreshment both physical, relational and spiritual each week. The problem though is that we misinterpret that if we spend our one day off each week doing jobs around the house or going to appointments.

There is on the agenda for this synod a motion encouraging clergy to have at least two days a week away from ministry responsibilities, and if possible two days in a row, and if possible, including Saturday. Some clergy may well be rolling their eyes at this which is why I am looking at my text and not looking up at this moment. 'Yet another impossible idea from the bishop. We are flat out getting one day off let alone two'. I am very aware of the demands on clergy time. I know the line-parishioners don't only get sick or die on days on. I know all that. I was a parish priest in regional New South Wales and Queensland for many years. It's full on.

I don't think the idea of two days off each week should be mandated, but I do think it should be encouraged. The concept is coming to synod so synod can discuss it and if the motion is passed the clergy have official encouragement to take the time where possible, especially to renew and refresh relationships with family and friends and have the good rest that is important for everyone.

There is another aspect of clergy wellbeing that I want to spend a few moments on and that is prayer. Again, from Bishop Brad Billings' book I quote:

Almost all the studies I have seen on the personal well-being of clergy and about longevity and resilience in ordained ministry, together with studies on preventing exhaustion and burnout, consistently point to the fundamental importance of a disciplined pattern of prayer. Discipline is important here, because the needs and the tasks will always be there, and the times at which they appear to be urgent will be many. Of course, there may be occasions on which the right response to a pastoral urgency is to drop everything and respond. But those times will normally be exceptional and rare. The norm will be a regular pattern of prayer, ideally daily and at a set time. (p43).

You might think I would normally raise the matter of clergy and their prayer life at a gathering of clergy, and I have done in the past. But I want to raise it here because I want parish leaders who are not ordained to know how important I think this is, so that clergy can be encouraged to make time for proper prayer. Prayer is a non-optional part of clergy life. It is our spiritual lifeline. We promise to spend time in prayer as part of our ordination vows, and prayer is critical as Bishop Billings says, to flourishing and effective life and ministry.

It would be good for parish leaders from time to time to ask clergy how their prayer discipline is going. Prayer is not something we do when we have the time or when we can fit it in. Jesus set the example of spending time regularly praying during his ministry and it would be a folly for us to think we can stay in tune with the Lord and not provide for regular (that is, daily) time of prayer. It would be good if parish leaders could ask their clergy whether there are barriers to prayer which the parish could remove.

I am conscious that those involved in chaplaincy ministry face different pressures on their prayer life. Places and organisations where chaplaincy is offered don't usually take time for prayer for chaplains into account and that is a challenge and something I think we need to work on in agreements with those organisations.

Well-being, with its source in prayer is not just for ordained people. I would also encourage all people of the church to include regular prayer and reflection on the scriptures as part of their discipleship. If you don't already have a prayer resource you use, I would recommend a worthwhile App for your phone called, Lectio365. It is free and offers morning and evening prayer time both in audio and written form. I have recommended lectio365 around the diocese and am pleased to hear that it is being useful for many people.

Reconciliation

Last year, this synod passed a resolution firstly, calling on all in the Anglican community to be an ally on voice, treaty and truth, respectfully supporting the voice of First Nations people, and the move to enshrining a voice to Parliament in the Australian Constitution; and second, acknowledging the Uluru Statement, which encourages all Australians to walk alongside First Nations peoples in a movement for a better future.

So, our position as a synod is clear.

Two weeks ago, a federal referendum to enshrine a Voice to Parliament for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was clearly lost. The idea of a Voice to parliament is not new. It has been called for by Indigenous leaders for many years and promised by former political leaders but never delivered. Over the past two weeks we have seen political leaders both state and federal, quickly walking away from commitments they made prior to the referendum to pursue constitutional recognition for the first people of this nation in different ways if the referendum was lost, or introduce voices or treaties on a state basis. This is obviously not a vote winner hence the retreats, and that highlights the problem of not having a Voice in the constitution. I note that the South Australian government has not, to my knowledge, signalled any intention to remove the Voice to parliament established by legislation in this state which I think is commendable.

With the referendum clearly lost the question is, what now? The majority of the voters in the referendum rejected the idea that had come from a representative group of Indigenous leaders following extensive consultation. So, what now? I have to say I am still struggling with this but here are a few thoughts.

Matthew 5.23 says this: Jesus said: “So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift”. Reconciliation is a Christian obligation. It is clear that the first peoples of this country have something against the nation. That’s clear. That’s why a Voice was proposed along with treaty and truth telling as part of a process of reconciliation.

As part of our discipleship of Jesus we need to continue to find ways to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people. We need to be an ally on voice treaty and truth. The referendum has been lost but the task remains.

The first people of this country deserve recognition. They deserve a first place. They have after all been the people of this land for a very long time. They are the first people. This is not about division, this is about respect.

The Anglican church of Australia already has a Voice to the church and that Voice is called NATSIAC, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Commission. As we pursue reconciliation, we need to hear NATSIAC and take seriously what they say. I suspect we will not find that easy. We will not find it easy to listen, and we will not find what they say easy to hear. But if we are to take Jesus words seriously that’s what we need to do.

Both before and since the referendum much has been said about the disadvantage many Indigenous Australians suffer and many words have been said about the need to address the terrible problems which afflict some in that community. Many of those words have been said by political leaders. We need to hold those political leaders to account for their words to see that action that makes a difference actually happens. We have seen how quickly politicians have run away from commitments made prior to the referendum, but the situation of many indigenous people of this land is completely unacceptable. That has to change. The words need to produce actions.

I look forward to the Anglican Church and especially the Diocese of Adelaide not only praying for reconciliation but doing what we can do, to play our part.

Unity

There continue to be significant disagreements in the Anglican church of Australia and some of those are reflected in our life as a diocese. The topics may have changed over the years but the fact of disagreement over the decades is a constant. The thing is though our context has changed. Christians as a percentage of the population are in decline, with less than half the population identifying as Christian nationally, and in South Australia only 7% of the population identifying as Anglicans.

In the past we might have had the luxury of disagreement between ourselves, but as a declining minority internal disagreement which saps energy, distorts focus, and inhibits our witness is attitude and behaviour we need to move beyond. The main thing must be the main thing-our sharing in God’s mission, our living as and making disciples of Jesus.

Adelaide diocese has a reputation around the Anglican Church of Australia as a divided diocese. Other bishops tell me how tough it must be to be the bishop of such a divided See. I'd like to see things differently. I'd like Adelaide diocese to be seen as a diocese of diverse Anglican views where the focus is on the main thing. Not winning or prevailing or power for one tribe or other, but a focus on sharing together in the mission of God.

I mentioned earlier in this address the three 'ologies' which the Mission Shaped Introduction course highlight. There are also two 'greats' which are very important. First the Great commandment: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

And second, the Great Commission: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'.

There will always be different views about things but let's focus on the main thing, the great things, and humbly let the Lord of the church deal with the rest.

Thanks

This will be the last Adelaide Synod, at least for some time, for Archdeacon David Bassett. David will be consecrated a bishop in the church of God on the feast of the presentation of Christ in the temple, that's the second of February, in St George's cathedral Perth. David has served Adelaide diocese very well since coming here in 2008 to be the Rector of Kensington. David held that office until 2020. Since then, he has served as archdeacon of the City and the Port, Assistant to the Primate, and Archdeacon assisting the Archbishop.

In his time in Adelaide David has also been the Archdeacon of Torrens, a member of the Diocesan Council, a member and chair of the bishop's election committee, acting registrar and secretary of synod, the chair of the property finance and resources committee, a trustee of the Leigh trust, a general synod representative, archbishop's delegate on the council of Pedare College and chair of that council, a governor of St Peters Collegiate school, a member of the pastoral leadership team, the Professional Standards Board, Provincial Council Cathedral Chapter, a Custodian of the seal, a member of the panel of assessors, a member of SBC Council, a member of AFSA Board, Diocesan Nominator, member of steering committee of Synod, a board member Laura and Alfred West Cottage Homes, and observer on behalf of Adelaide Synod to the Willochra Synod.

I fear I may have left some things out but sufficient to say David has served this Diocese very loyally and well. We thank you David. I thank you David for your support to me over the years I have been in Adelaide. We wish you and Susan well. We pray for you. At his consecration David will be presented with a pectoral cross to remind him that he preaches Christ crucified and risen and that pectoral cross will be from the Diocese of Adelaide. It hasn't been made yet or I'd show it to you, but it will be, and it comes with our prayers, thanks and best wishes.

On behalf of the synod, I'd like to thank the registrar and secretary of synod Joe Thorp for another really good year. Joe has initiated significant advances that have been made and we appreciate you Joe as well as the dedicated staff of the synod office who work with you. I want also to thank my episcopal colleagues Bishop Denise, Bishop Tim, Bishop Chris and for your assistance and wise counsel.

All in all, I think it's been a good year since we last met, and I look forward to the year before us.

I want to finish with Luke 5.1-11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So, they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Peter had worked hard but without success. Jesus encouraged him to keep trying and out of obedience to Jesus Peter did what Jesus told him and bingo, great success.

Sometimes we can get disheartened. It feels like we have tried everything and nothing has worked. We can become dispirited and feel like giving up. But as we are attentive the voice of Jesus we might hear-give it another go, try this side or this way, and we might be amazed at what happens.

Sometimes it's as though we forget that Christ is risen. We serve him. His spirit is with us, and will be until the end of the age. The Lord is with us. May we know and follow his leading.