
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 2018



AT THE THIRD ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE
53RD SYNOD

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF TASMANIA

LAUNCESTON 1 JUNE 2018

THE RIGHT REVD DR RICHARD CONDIE

BISHOP OF TASMANIA

To him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)

I acknowledge and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of this land on which we gather today, and acknowledge the Elders past and present.

I also acknowledge and pay respect to the Aboriginal communities and the Elders past and present of South Brisbane and Melbourne where my family has been nurtured.

1. OUR VISION

It is a year since we launched our Vision for the Diocese of Tasmania. I am very grateful to God that so often when I am out and about, at Board meetings, speaking with clergy, and visiting parishes, that aspects of that Vision get constantly talked about. Each day I pray that it will be the subject of our Parish Council meetings, our prayers and our planning. Each day I pray that the Lord will bring revival to our church, so that we will truly be “A Church for Tasmania, making Disciples of Jesus.”

The challenges of finding a way to fund redress for survivors of child sexual abuse have dominated our thinking and prayers in the preparation for this Synod. So it is perhaps especially now important that we remind ourselves of the theological convictions that undergird everything that we do – our Vision, this Synod, and the challenge of funding redress. We have five convictions:

- *Jesus Christ is the head of the Church ...*

We are confident because we know that God is working out his sovereign purposes, and that his church will prevail because Jesus is its Lord and Head. We respond in humble service to his Lordship in the power of his Spirit.

- *And He has sent us to make Disciples ...*

Propelled by God’s love, the purpose of the Church is to go into all the world and to make disciples of Jesus, baptising and teaching them to obey everything that Jesus commanded. There are many good things we could do, but this is our primary task and the centre of all of our activity.

- *By Word, Prayer and Service ...*

God builds his church by preaching the Word, and through the prayers of his people, supported by their loving service of the world. Spiritual vitality is found in the biblical gospel, and is expressed in our ministry of Word, sacraments, and prayer, and through acts of service.

- *Supported by fruitful godly Leaders ...*

God uses faithful people who have a mission heart to lead his church into growth. Therefore, we need gifted clergy and lay leaders to serve in and through our churches.

- *God being our provider, and us stewards of His gifts*

God owns all the resources for ministry in Tasmania and is able to bless and resource the ministry to which we are called. We need to be good stewards of these resources, unlocking and deploying them for his service.

It is comforting that those words penned over twelve months ago, through consultation with many different people in the Diocese, are so relevant to the challenges and tasks ahead of us.

With all of our fears and anxieties, Jesus is still the head of his Church, he has still commissioned us to make disciples of all nations. We still do this disciple-making by the spiritual means of word, prayer and service. We are still supported by fruitful godly leaders, many of whom are in this room, and many praying at home for us. God is still our provider, giving us every single resource we need for ministry. And we are still called to be wise stewards of the resources he has entrusted to us. I hope that many of us will keep this in mind in the debates and discussions to follow tonight and tomorrow.

I thought it would be a great encouragement for us to begin our Synod reflecting on some of the work of our Vision that has borne fruit this year.

2. OUR PROGRESS

DIRECTOR OF MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

Stephen Carnaby has made a wonderful transition to this role over the last 10 or so months. But more than simply acknowledging him as a faithful servant of Christ and a fruitful leader of people, I want to celebrate what has been achieved under his leadership over the last year.

If you haven't already, please look at his report in your Synod papers. By the numbers you can see the fruitfulness of his role. He has managed to work with a number of parishes and stimulate growth. Training and coaching opportunities abound. It seems like every week brings a new idea that gets implemented with an individual or a parish or a network. We are so blessed as a Diocese to have his energy driving the development of ministry in our parishes.

PATHWAYS

We want every Parish to have an executable plan for providing a clear pathway for people of every age and stage of life to become disciples of Jesus, who make disciples for Jesus.

We have now had 9 parishes involved in a Pathways workshop: the Parishes of Lindisfarne, Northside, Battery Point, Ulverstone, Burnie, Devonport, Circular Head, Deloraine, and Howrah. This workshop helps parishes identify a mission focus group – the people they are trying to reach with the gospel, and then helps them develop a discipleship pathway for that group.

One of the early adopters for this approach was the Parish of Lindisfarne. They decided that their mission focus group was going to be the young families in Lindisfarne.

They began by sorting out their website and signage, and even just trimmed the bushes so people could see the front door. They were trying to be findable and accessible. The existing congregation were more mature in age, but they went about planning and establishing a playgroup, and advertising it on social media in the community.

To date they have had 58 families come to playgroup over two and a half terms. 20 families are coming very regularly and have moved firmly into that as a “belonging space”.

Many of the mums and dads talk fondly of the 'grandmas' who help out with playgroup, and the morning tea and coffee is a highlight for many parents – the only chance many of them get for a hot drink and a little treat. People love this Christian hospitality! They have 7 women from church involved in Playgroup who help out anywhere from every week to once a month. These women are in their 60's and 70's.

About 6 families joined them from the playgroup for the kids Christmas service and 4 for the post service Easter activities they ran. They have now had 2 families join their church who met them and heard about what they were doing through the playgroup, and they have started a fortnightly small group with these families.

Changes are now planned to the Sunday services, to make them more family friendly. These changes, while difficult for some, will allow Lindisfarne Anglican to have a healthy long-term future. Visitors are starting to come to church for the first time in ages. One parishioner said last Sunday, “it was so wonderful to see new people in church and just get to know them and hear their stories”.

Similar stories could be told in a number of our parishes. It would be great to see many more Parishes embrace “Pathways” in the year ahead.

MINISTRY TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

We want to see each parish prioritise effective ways to minister to young people and families, with making disciples their chief aim. In 2018, there are 3 parishes with Playgroups, 7 parishes with Mainly Music programs, 18 parishes with Sunday Schools (up from 13 in 2017) and 8 with youth groups.

I hope you were as encouraged as I was by reading about the growth of children's ministry in Circular Head this year as reported on the Diocesan website.

Revd Joel Nankervis, Priest in Charge of the Parish of Circular Head said “By the grace of God we have seen many wonderful things occur. In many respects our parish is unrecognisable to how it was twelve months ago”.

“Our prayer upon coming here was that God would do immeasurably more than all we could ever ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). He is abundantly answering those prayers”.

The Children's Ministry that was launched shortly after Joel and Lyn's arrival has continued to grow, forcing the church to refurbish its church office. They have created a wonderful

meeting space for older children to be able to talk about Jesus without the distraction of little ones.

Two new Bible studies have begun. Lyn Nankervis leads one aimed at young mums, which has been a great blessing for those ladies. The other is an all-age group, which has helped break down some of the age barriers with people from their twenties right through to their seventies attending.

What a wonderful story of God's blessing! While these ministries are encouraging signs, we also need to see more growth in ministry to young people and families if our churches are going to flourish.

I am pleased to say that we now have 7 parish-based youth and children's ministry Trainees leading young people in our Parishes, and 2 Trainees working in University Student ministry. This is a great sign for the future.

A CULTURE OF SAFETY FOR ALL

The focus of training in Safe Church Communities this year has been on culture – how we can move from simple compliance with safe church practices to a culture that bears that out. As you can imagine culture change is a slow process. But we feel like we have made some progress this year. The face to face training events have been well attended, and we are trying to improve their quality all the time. The quality of literature and training and accreditation materials continues to steadily improve. We have seen some Parishes really work hard this year to get their coordinators functioning well, and the level of accreditation and compliance is on the rise.

MINISTERS' NETWORKS

One of Stephen Carnaby's jobs was to get the ministry leaders' cohorts functioning well, and I am pleased to say they are functioning much better than when I was looking after them. The idea is that clergy and other ministers meet together from time-to-time for training and mutual encouragement and support. There are 8 training cohorts involving more than 100 ministry leaders. These include Emerging Leaders (including those recently ordained); New Rectors; Senior Clergy; 4th Quarter Clergy; Enabled and Honorary Clergy; Youth and Children's Ministers; AHW Chaplains and School Chaplains. All these have met over the last year, some more intensively than others, and by all reports seem to be progressing well.

We have also been working on clergy coaching and external support. Andy Goodacre has taken on a new role as Director of Coaching for the Diocese. We now have 13 local clergy who have been trained as ministry coaches, and 53 ministry leaders are regularly participating in leadership coaching.

CHURCH PLANTING

It has been wonderful for us as a Diocese this year to commission two new Church Planters, The Revd Chris Duff with Naomi and family, and The Revd Jamie Bester with Claire and their family. This is a sign of our spiritual health and the growth of the church. We know that new churches are more effective in reaching unbelievers than existing churches, and we are keen to multiply our church planting opportunities. We have been so honoured to partner with BCA in both of these plants

Jamie and Claire are leading Southern Beaches Anglican which is now underway meeting in community facilities south of Sorell. We are delighted to see these signs of new growth. Chris and Naomi are forming a team to establish a new church in the suburb of Brighton in northern Hobart. We wait eagerly to see this church established.

This July marks the end of our partnership with BCA in the planting or replanting of Barney's in North Launceston. It is great to see that ministry flourish with health and vitality, and now being able to stand independently from BCA. We are very thankful to God for his faithfulness.

PRAYER – LAMENT AND REPENTANCE

As signalled last year in Synod, we devoted the season of Lent in 2018 to Lament and Repentance for our past failures. The 40 days of lament and repentance were some of the most profound in my ministry to date, as we lamented and repented of our failures to protect children from abuse, to protect people from family violence, from the misuse of power, to honour and respect the first peoples of our state, to care for the environment, and, right at the heart of our new vision, to make disciples – to hand on the faith to the next generation.

Beginning with the Ordination Service on the first Saturday in Lent, where at the end of the ordination, robes were removed as a sign of contrition, we began our lament, using a specially written litany based on Psalm 51. Two days later a clergy Lenten Retreat saw clergy coming to the Lord in lament and repentance.

During the 40 days, I visited 45 of our 48 Parishes (I didn't make it to the islands) and led a simple prayer meeting of lament and repentance. In each of these, local issues were brought to the Lord in Prayer. It was extraordinary.

People confessed sins of omission and commission in their parish life. One community focussing on the pain of their convict heritage. Another disclosing an occult sacrifice that had happened on the Lord's Table in the 80's. Another lamenting the Aboriginal massacre on their church site. Still another weeping over the lost generations. And more than one realising their failures to adapt to allow young people to encounter faith for themselves.

Sins and failures of historic sexual abuse were named, even some we didn't know about. Family violence was lamented with downcast eyes. The misuse of power (often in the hands of lay people withholding permission for change) was acknowledged, and sometimes past

unnamed Rectors were alluded to. Tears were shed for the loss of aboriginal culture and language (mostly by the youngest members of the church), and on and on it went.

Mostly the time was met with an incredible sense of relief and deep joy, as the burden of the dark past was lifted from the shoulders. Sometimes the morning tea after was like a festive celebration. Oh the joy of sins forgiven!

The sense I had was that God was up to something in all of this. Reports have flowed in from different parts of the Diocese – the theme: Hard but Good. One Rector wrote: “Sunday was very powerful. I felt the Spirit’s prompt to name some [church] specific sins, and then opened up for a time for public confession and repentance in the final songs. Dozens came forward on their knees, cut to the heart... The whole 6 weeks I have been hearing: ‘This has been painful but good in so many ways’”.

Each week in our prayers we resolved to act in a new way for Safe Children, Protected Families, Servant Leadership, Indigenous Reconciliation, Environmental Stewardship and Creative Disciple-making. We have more work to do in discerning what God is calling us to in these areas. I didn’t realise at the time, that the Lord was preparing us for the massive task of facing redress, but our steps to deal with it at this Synod are in direct response to these spiritual resolves.

OTHER AREAS OF THE VISION

There is much more I could say about our progress towards our Vision of being a church for Tasmania, making disciples of Jesus. We could talk about the seven new clergy who have joined us since last year, including three new Deacons, and the two new appointments for clergy who were already in the Diocese. We could speak about the 29 Tasmanians studying theological degrees on-line through Ridley, and the two new ordinands. We could speak about the Bishop’s Training Event, the good work of the schools in embracing a vision for Anglican education, the excellent work of Anglicare as it has intentionally aligned with the Diocesan Vision, and the growth of chaplaincy. We could focus on the Diocesan Office review that took place and the many changes being rolled out in that sphere. But what is very clear is that we are a Diocese on the move.

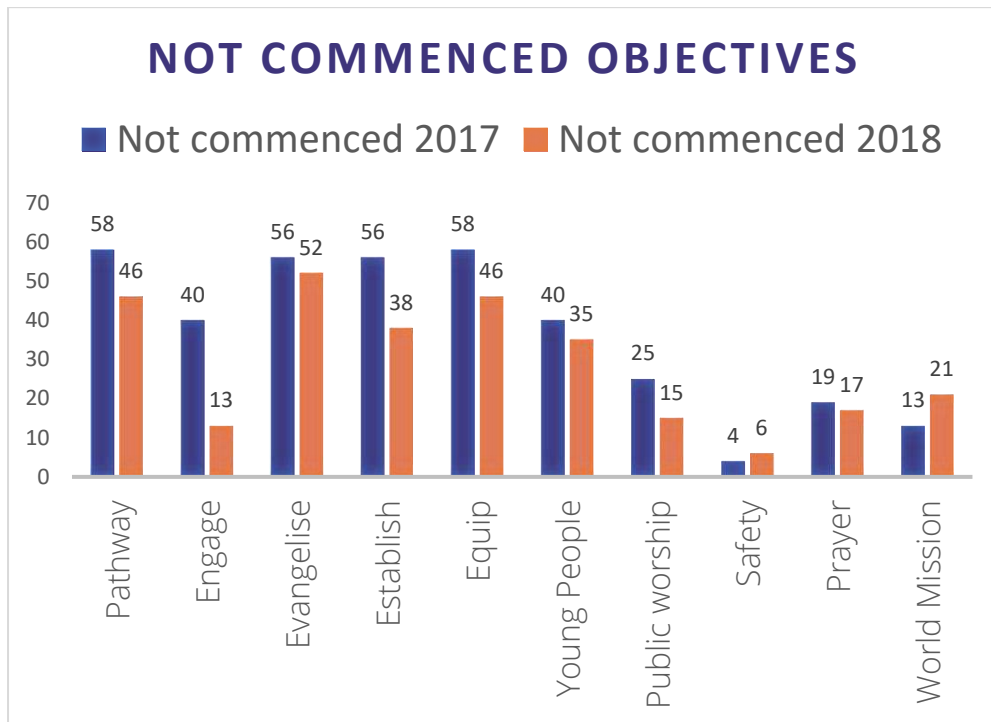
PROGRESS BY THE NUMBERS

I close this section by sharing with you a few figures from our ‘Vision Report Card’. This is a bit of a blunt tool, but I am convinced that what you measure is what you care about. We asked Parishes (and where they didn’t respond to us, their Archdeacons) to rate each of the Vision objectives, in each Parish, as either Achieved, In Progress or Not Commenced. These are indicated by a green, yellow or red button.

We did this as a base line for last Synod, and I am pleased to say that in all but two categories, the percentages of Parishes who have ‘achieved’ things (green lights) have increased on last year. In all categories the activities ‘in progress’ (yellow) have increased. And in those activities reported as ‘not commenced’, there has been a decrease in all categories except world mission.

This is just a snapshot, but it tells a great story of what is happening in the Diocese. It should also give us some food for thought, as it highlights the areas in need of work. 46% of Parishes report that they have not begun a pathway for disciple making. 52% of Parishes have not commenced any clear activities for evangelism. Over a third of our Parishes have not commenced any ministry to young people and families. There is still much work to do.





3. OUR CHALLENGES

We need more flourishing parishes. We have the plan and the resources, and so could we see another 10 Parishes undertake a Pathways workshop in the next 12 months? Could we see 10 of those who have begun work bring it on further? Could we see every Parish attempt something by way of evangelism – an Alpha Course or a Christianity Explored course? Could we see the Bishop’s Training Event on ‘Everyday Disciple Making’ this year, double in attendance? Could we see new models for rural ministry develop with the funds released from the redress proposals? Could we also resolve to move forward from our season of Lament with more focus on Safe Children, Protected Families, Servant Leadership, Indigenous Reconciliation, Environmental Stewardship and Creative Disciple-making?

4. THANKS

I do not want to let this moment pass without recording to the Synod my sincere thanks to a number of people.

Mr Paul Cavanough, former Director of Ministry Services, had his last Synod with us last year and we farewelled him from this body at that time. While he intended to return to work in a new capacity early this year, he was unable due to the effects of a chronic health condition and associated treatment. This decision was made when it became clear that the health issues will be lifelong and that treatment options are limited.

Paul reports that the health issues are manageable but that it would just not be possible to meet reasonable demands and expectations of continued employment. Paul is in good spirits and very much enjoying the shift in priorities to his family and his personal interests.

He says that the shift from strategic leadership to prayer supporter is not easy but one which is good for the soul.

I want to thank Paul for his particular contribution to the Anglican Church in Tasmania over the last 16 years. It has been a wonderful gift to us all, and we are all very much in his debt.

Second I want to record my thanks before the Synod for the contribution of the former Registrar, Mr Robert Wallace. Robert served in this role for 5 years, over the transition from one Bishop to the next. His extensive knowledge of Tasmania and working knowledge of what it was like to be a church warden and Parish member made his particular contribution full of warmth and a commitment to Parishes. He was a great mentor to me in my first two years. Many thanks to Robert Wallace.

Robert was of course assisted in the Registry by the excellent Lesley Metcalfe. Lesley as a faithful and humble servant would be mortified to have her work pointed out in this public way. But we all know how much corporate knowledge she carried. Her generous, efficient service is missed. I was not sure we would get this Synod off the ground without her, but we seemed to have just made it.

Mr James Veltmeyer also left the Diocesan team late last year. James had worked in the Diocesan Youth Ministry role for five years. He was the first person to phone me when the nominations for Bishop were made public in 2015. He didn't think I had said enough in my papers about a commitment to youth and children's ministry. We will miss his tireless advocacy for young people.

My thankyou would not be sufficient without recording my heartfelt appreciation to our current Diocesan Team. They all work with passion and enthusiasm to serve Parishes and Agencies in the Diocese in often very challenging circumstances. On your behalf I want to thank, James Oakley, Ellie Firth and Sarah Burton in the Registrar's office; David Peters, Audrey Chin, and Carol Campbell in the Accounts Office; Sonya de Lacey in Media and Communications; Jennifer Cavanough and Annette Sims in Safe Church Communities and Professional Standards; Stephen Carnaby as Director of Ministry Development; and Carolyn McGinn as my very patient Executive Assistant. A wonderful team, and none of us can do this without you.

5. CHILD PROTECTION AND REDRESS

The Synod has a lot of work to do over the next two days, but among our business are two matters that rise above the others. They are the General Synod Canons on Child Protection measures, and the Redress Proposal.

At the very outset I want to say that some of the matters we will talk about in both these areas are confronting. It could well be that someone in this Synod is a survivor of abuse themselves, or is closely connected to one, or the events that transpired here in the Diocese in the past.

So, in response to this, two things. First, an appeal to the members of the Synod to speak graciously and kindly. Even though we must talk about our responsibility to fund redress,

we must never talk in a way that would make survivors of abuse think that we do not care for them. We must also speak about these matters with such gentleness not to cause a stumbling block to another person in this room, who struggles with these matters.

Second, if you find that you are troubled by anything that you hear, and need to leave the room for fresh air, then you are welcome to do so. If you need someone to pray with you, please let one of the clergy know and we will arrange someone for you.

CHILD PROTECTION

I commend to you the work of the General Synod, the national gathering of our church representatives. The legislation that comes before us is very important as most of it comes out of a response to the Royal Commission on Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It is not possible to amend any of this legislation, but simply to adopt it or not.

In particular there are a number of Canons which if adopted will deliver a national approach to the protection of children. These include: uniform episcopal standards as they relate to the protection of children; an amendment to the Offences Canon which includes provisions relating to offences involving child abuse; a Canon concerning hearing a confession of child sexual abuse; and a Canon bringing clarification around the removal of Holy Orders. I set out my expectation last year, that these Canons will be adopted by the Synod, as they allow us to have a consistent approach across the nation with respect to Child Protection.

REDRESS

Perhaps the most significant and far reaching piece of work that we will do in this Synod is to consider a Bill for the Redress Fund Ordinance. I don't propose in this address to speak about the Bill itself, but about the principles behind the Synod taking decisive action when it comes to making provisions for funding redress.

Our Vision is to be *a Church for Tasmania, making disciples of Jesus*. The Vision requires that we be FOR Tasmania in every way possible: to contribute to its spiritual wellbeing, to be good corporate citizens, to act for justice, all the while holding out the person of Jesus Christ and commending him to everyone we can. Our desire to make disciples of Jesus, requires us to first be fully devoted disciples ourselves. It is only as disciples of Jesus, that we can make disciples of Jesus.

As hard as it might be we must see our response to the need to provide redress for survivors of sexual abuse as an expression of our own discipleship and therefore of the Vision of our church.

Our church failed to provide a safe place for vulnerable people in the 1960's, 70's and 80's in particular. We may never know the full extent, but perhaps up to 200 children were sexually abused and assaulted by clergy and leaders in this church. Look around you. There are probably close to 200 people in this room. This is a tragedy of monumental proportions.

We have done much to address this in the years since we began to acknowledge what had happened. Many years before the Royal Commission, we began to put our house in order. We have worked hard on the selection, training and accreditation of our workers. More recently we have been working on full compliance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission in our organisation.

We remain grateful to the Royal Commission for exposing the breadth of this blight in our history. They have held us accountable and shown our sins for all the world to see. It is right and proper for us to make amends for these sins.

Making restitution for wrongs is a Christian idea. It first appears in the Hebrew scriptures in Exodus 22. Here it says that if a man steals an animal and if it dies or is sold, then he shall make amends by repaying 4 or 5 times the value. Or if he borrows an animal and it dies he shall make full restitution to the one from whom it is borrowed. The stand out example in the New Testament is Zacchaeus, who when he encounters Jesus, repays four times the amount of what he had extorted out of vulnerable people as a tax collector. Jesus even says that this restitution is evidence of Zacchaeus' salvation.

So the notion of providing redress, to in some way make restitution for the wrongs committed in the past, is our Christian duty. Providing redress payments to survivors of abuse in our church, will provide a measure of restorative justice for those survivors. It will show them the recognition that they deserve by us acknowledging the wrongs committed to them, and that they will find the emotional and financial support that they need. I hope that no-one in this room will attempt to argue against funding redress.

More than once in the last few weeks people have expressed to me that we should not have to pay for the sins of others that we did not commit. I understand when people outside the church feel this way, but I am disturbed when I hear it from people who are members of the church. This comment shows a profound misunderstanding of the Christian gospel. The very heart of the Christian message rests on an innocent one who suffers for the redemption of many.

Jesus Christ took on the punishment for the sins of the whole world, sins that he did not commit, so that he could provide restoration and forgiveness. It seems to me the costly sacrifice that we are being called to make is exactly the heart of our discipleship.

There is a cost to us in following Jesus. He was the one who said to would-be followers that they "must deny themselves and take up their cross daily" (Luke 9:23-24). He calls us to DIE to ourselves, to shed ourselves of earthly comforts, to take the road of setting aside our personal wants and embracing sacrifice, even to death. Jesus was the one who said to a hesitant disciple who wanted to bury his father before following – "let the dead bury their own dead" (Luke 9:60). He calls us to a life of radical reorganisation.

The apostles do the same. They speak of the life of the disciple as one that shares in his glory but also in Christ's sufferings (Rom 8:17). It is a gift of God granted to us to share in believing in Christ but also suffering for him (Phil 1:29). Suffering proves the genuineness of our faith, purifies our character, and results in praise and glory and honour when Jesus is revealed (1 Peter 1:6-7).

If you signed up for the Christian faith thinking it was going to bring comfort and ease, and give you everything you wanted without suffering and sacrifice, then you have been mistaken. If you thought Christianity was stability and the resistance against change and growth, then you need to read the scriptures again. To be a disciple is to lose your life.

Jesus is the one who said "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). He was the one who said to an enthusiastic follower "Foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no-where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58), implying that this would also be the pathway for disciples. He is the one who said "Life does not consist of the abundance of your possessions" (Luke 12: 15) ,and "do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19-20).

We are all to be pitied if we think that our Christian faith is dependent on temporal things including church buildings. There was a headline in The Mercury this week about church building sales that said, "Rebuild a shattered faith". Can you imagine how ludicrous this statement sounds to Jesus, as if faith, true faith, could be shattered by the selling of a building? What a miserable and pathetic gospel we would have if it could be destroyed by the loss of a building.

Our discipleship, our following of Jesus, our trust and hope and life is so much more than real estate. Whatever we decide to do to fund redress, we must tackle this terrible folk religion that we keep hearing.

My hope is that this Synod will rise above the clamour of temporal concerns. That whatever method we decide is best to fund the just, merciful and right course of action to provide redress, will not be concerned with what we lose; will not be concerned with cost or buildings or what the world will say about us; but will only be motivated by our love and obedience to the Lord Jesus whom we follow.

My hope is that we will not spare a single thought for ourselves and what we will lose, but only for those who will be served by our costly sacrificial generosity.

My hope is that we will so love justice, that we would have no attachment to the things of this world, to our money or possessions or buildings.

My hope is that we will be so moved with generosity that we will not just be willing to give up finance and property assets, but that radical generosity will flow from our own personal wealth.

My hope is that the Anglican Church in Tasmania will show the society around us what really matters to us. Jesus, and him alone.

My hope is that we will so love mercy, and be so moved with compassion for the lost, broken and damaged, that we will find even more sacrificial ways of serving them, than what is proposed.

My hope is that we would be SO in love with Jesus that we WOULD deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow him on the costly path of discipleship, and that we would do it gladly without complaining, and with courage and thankfulness.

My hope is that our conversations in the next days will be filled with love and gentleness, and grace-filled prayerfulness as we work out how to serve those who have been hurt in our church. That we would not be looking to our own needs, but to the needs of others.

The world is watching us. Let us honour Christ in what he calls us to do.

The Right Revd Dr Richard Condie
Bishop of Tasmania
1 June 2018