
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 2019



AT THE FIRST ORDINARY SESSION
OF THE
54TH SYNOD
ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF TASMANIA

LAUNCESTON 14 JUNE 2019

THE RIGHT REVD DR RICHARD CONDIE
BISHOP OF TASMANIA

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 their 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.

*I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!
He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just.
A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. (Deuteronomy 32:3-4)*

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

It is good to take the time to recount what the Lord has done, and to acknowledge that he is “The faithful God” whose “works are perfect” indeed.

This last year has been challenging and rewarding. The massive decision taken by the Synod last year to enact the Redress Ordinance has consumed much of our time and energy as a Diocese. It made the last 18 months hard work, as we grappled with the impact of proposing to sell the 107 properties on the initial list, which was reduced to 73 in December.

The proposal was a painful one for many and proved difficult to communicate to the wider community. The hardest thing was sharing in people’s grief over the loss of places of cherished memories, and I am still conscious of that as we deconsecrate buildings around the state. Each one is like attending a funeral, as we farewell the physical manifestation of so many people’s hopes and dreams of the past.

However painful and difficult to communicate, the process proved to be a robust one. Parishes and community groups were invited to provide feedback to us about the properties on the proposed list. A small working group from Diocesan Council worked through a massive amount of material. I made personal responses to over 200 pieces of communication. We listened well to people, and the DC was presented with all the information to make a decision about all 107 properties.

The outcome has not been welcomed by everyone, and some are living with the disappointment that their church building will be sold. I am confident that we have made the best decision possible about our future. Our independent probity advisor watched the whole process and gave us a positive report on the way it was conducted.

It is important to keep the purpose in mind as we review what took place. We wanted to make sure that we had the capacity to meet our redress obligations, so that survivors of sexual abuse would be able to access the funds they needed as a matter of restorative justice, and at the same time, to ensure the financial viability of the Diocese. At the time of writing we are processing just over \$1 million of claims through the National Redress Scheme and the Diocesan Pastoral Support and Assistance Scheme. This is a sign of what is to come. It is because of your courage that we have the finances fully available to meet

these claims and the ones we will pay in the future, without concern that the future of the Diocese will be in jeopardy.

While we saw a popular backlash to our plan in some local communities, there are some other spots of feedback that you may not be aware of. Last December I was invited to a business and community leader Christmas function hosted by the Premier. Given the reports of community sentiment in the media, I was in a little bit of trepidation about attending but went along anyway. I was met that night by a string of business and community leaders, who congratulated us on our courage and our plan to address the problem before us. Not all of them were personally supportive, but they could see our convictions and the strong will it took to carry out the plan. A few weeks ago, I met a prominent Tasmanian in the airport. He told me he thought we had done “just the right thing”. He wants to write an opinion piece for the paper commending us on taking the stand we did.

As I move around the state, I see so many signs of life beginning to emerge, even in unlikely places. Some churches got the wakeup call that they needed, and the Spirit is beginning to stir people again. One church has been encouraging people to read the bible at home. The rector told me: “One elderly woman ... was leaving the service with one of the large print bibles in her hand. She asked if she could borrow it as I had been encouraging them to read and she realised she only had one very old bible on the shelf at home (unread for many years). I told her she could keep it!” This is one of many great stories around the Diocese.

I am reminded of a couple of biblical texts as I reflect on last year. In talking about his death and resurrection, Jesus said “Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” There is something very significant about this death to life cycle in the church, of new life coming from death, of sprouts of hope coming from places of great desolation. Paul recalls the Lord’s words to him in his own ministry: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness”. How true this is. When we are thoroughly stripped bare and dependent on him, he shows his power.

I want to pay tribute at this point to the Diocesan Council and the Registry Team for their work on the Redress Project. Last year produced a huge volume of work for the DC, who cheerfully stepped up to the plate. In particular, I want to thank the small team of people led by Bishop Chris Jones, which included Malcolm McGinn, Joan Harvey, Fiona Oates, and Bishop Andrew Curnow, who read through every submission in detail and provided a report to the DC. We are all very much in their debt.

The Registry Team, including Judson Williams and Claire Upton in the Redress Office, who continue to work very hard on the Redress Project, as well as all those who responded to phone calls and letters and emails, also deserve our thanks. I’m not sure if James Oakley would have taken on the job as Registrar at the start of last year, had he known what was in store for him. But he has led the team with intelligence, grace and a calm determination through many challenges.

OUR VISION – A PROGRESS REPORT

Our Vision is to be *a church for Tasmania, making disciples of Jesus*. To achieve this, we have been working on four aspects of our mission:

1. Building a network of flourishing parish centres
2. Developing partnerships with Anglican agencies and schools
3. Growing missional chaplaincy in hospitals, aged-care facilities and prisons; and
4. Being a people of blessing in our local communities.

BUILDING A NETWORK OF FLOURISHING PARISH CENTRES

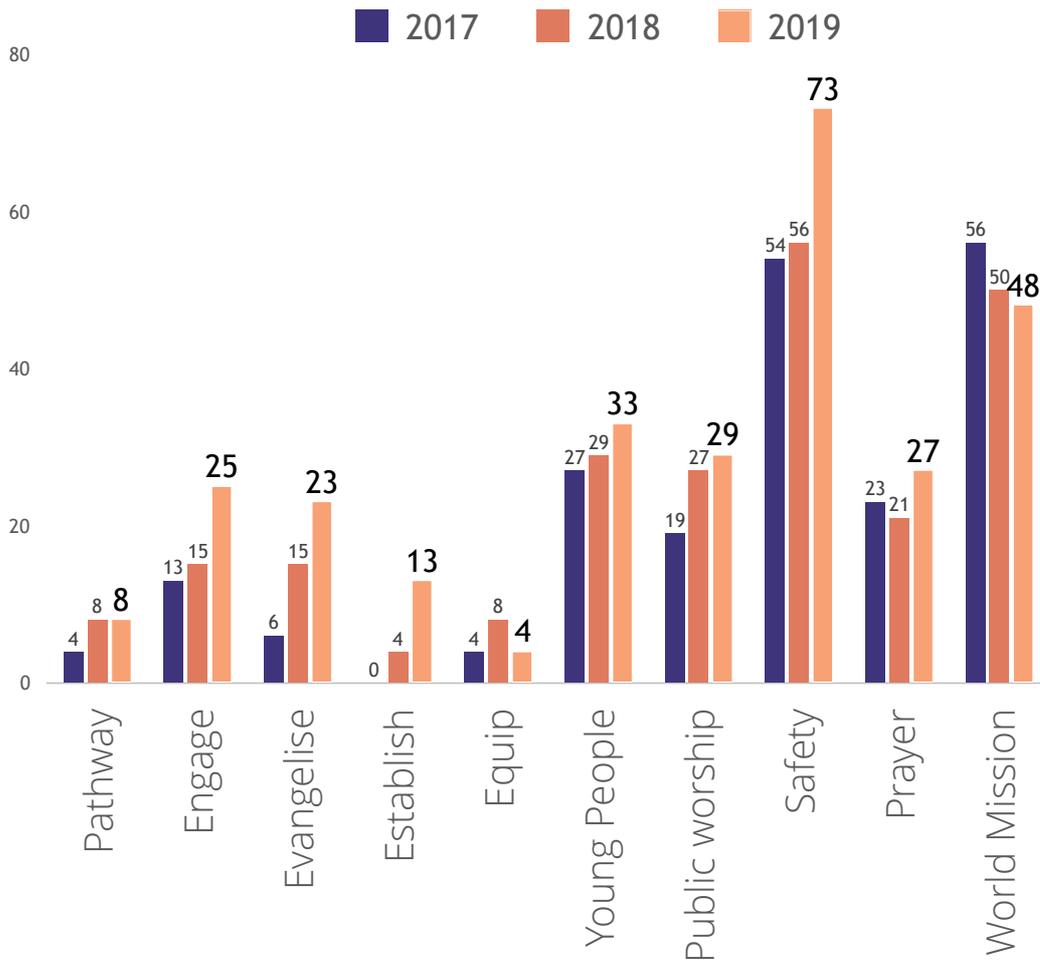
Our Parish ministry is in good heart across the state. As I have said above, a number of our Parishes responded well to the “wake-up call” of the redress project and are thinking about growth. Anecdotally, I have heard from three rectors in the last two weeks who have told me that their giving income has increased significantly on last year. We have seen more evangelistic courses like Alpha and Christianity Explored being run in Parishes across the state, and I’m sure this is translating into people coming to faith as disciples of Jesus.

We have had record numbers of people offering for ordination, with four people last year and another 4 or 5 this year. We regularly get enquiries from clergy from the mainland about coming to do ministry in Tasmania. There are a growing number of Tasmanian Anglicans studying theology on-line and meeting in a study cohort. Attendance at the Bishop’s Training Event grows year on year, and this year we will be live-streaming to the North West to increase our training reach. There are now 9 Children and Youth Ministry trainees working in the Diocese. And we had a wonderful Diocesan Celebration and Ordination service at the start of this year.

BY THE NUMBERS

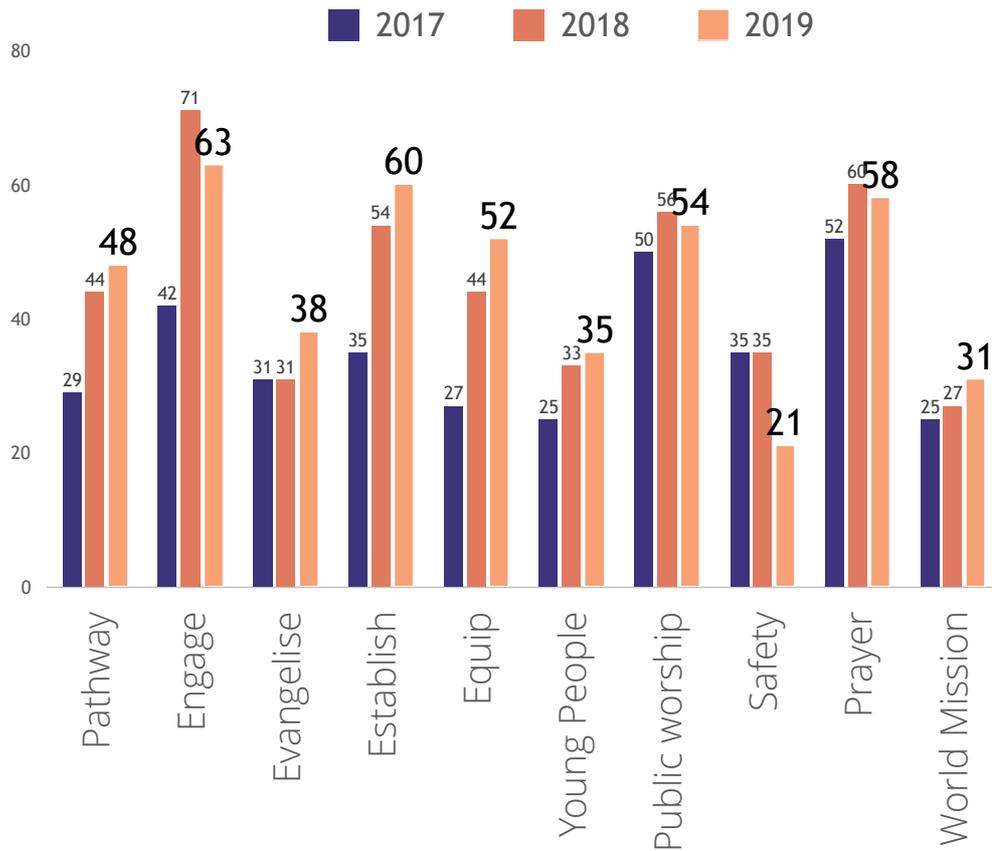
As in past years we have been working on our “Vision Report Card”. We want to measure what is important to us. For each of the measures of Parish ministry that we set out in the vision, we have rated each Parish with a red, yellow or green light. Red is “not commenced”, yellow is “in progress” and green is “achieved or established”. As I have said before it is a slightly blunt tool, and is a little subjective, but we do get a picture about the progress of the Diocesan Vision.

ACHIEVED OBJECTIVES



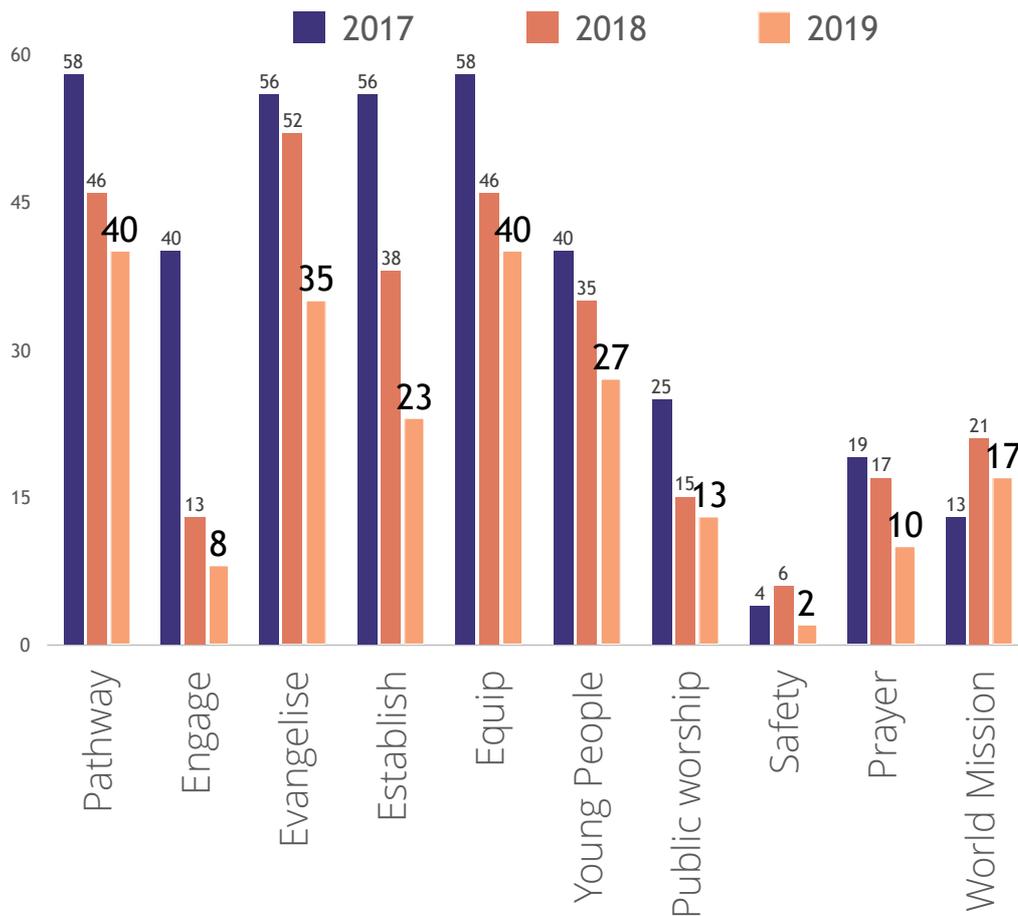
I am pleased to say that on most of the measures of green lights, the established objectives, we have seen an increase on 2018. There are more Parishes engaging with people outside the church, doing evangelism, and establishing people in the faith than last year. There are more parishes with established ministry to young people and families, more public worship aimed at discipleship, more parishes with established cultures of safety, and more parishes with established prayer opportunities.

IN-PROGRESS OBJECTIVES



In the areas which are in-progress (the yellow lights on our dashboard) there have been increases too. Increases in people developing a discipleship pathway, in doing evangelism, establishing new believers, equipping leaders, doing ministry with young people and world mission. All of this is great. There are few that have backed off a little, and we need to address them.

NOT COMMENCED OBJECTIVES



Very pleasingly, there has also been a reduction of objectives “not yet commenced” (red lights on the dashboard) across all mission objectives. This is very exciting as it means that lots of Parishes are starting to have a go. There are some challenges here, however:

- 40% of Parishes have not commenced developing a pathway for making disciples.
- 35% of Parishes have not commenced doing any form of evangelism; and
- 27% of Parishes (more than 1 in 4) have not commenced any ministry to young people and families.

I understand that the time and energy spent on Redress for some of you has dominated the past year. However, we now need to turn our focus to address these things for the health and life of the church in the years ahead.

NETWORKS

A pleasing development this year has been the establishment of a network Parish in Launceston. Last year the Parish of Riverlinks had some conversations with me about their future. The ministry team was tired after 13 years of Enabler Supported Ministry and was thinking about what was next for them. After lots of conversations and prayer we decided that bringing it to a conclusion and giving thanks for the life of that church community and all it had achieved was the best step.

At the same time conversations were being had across the greater Launceston city area, about the best way to reach this city for Christ. St John's had begun some cooperative conversations with St Peter's in St Leonards, and then began conversations with Riverlinks. With the implications of redress on church buildings in Launceston, some other relationships were formed. With a great degree of cooperation, and a massive amount of work, the church landscape in Launceston has changed dramatically.

The All Saints Network was formed, which is a network church with one common vision, but local expressions of worship across the region: in the City Centre (St John's), in the South (at St Leonards), and in George Town. Many from the Riverlinks churches joined in the network as well. Negotiations are well advanced with Barney's in North Launceston about the possibility of joining the network as well, and they met with all the parts of the network for worship on Pentecost Sunday.

Also, given the different styles of worship in Launceston, and with the imminent sale of St Mark's South Launceston under the redress ordinance, Holy Trinity welcomed the St Mark's congregation into their fellowship, and also reached out to Evandale, where a new evening service has been established in the last few months.

All of this strengthens our gospel witness. Local expressions of worship are nurtured with the culture of these communities preserved, while all the advantages of being in a larger team with greater shared resources across the network are passed on to others. We hope under God that this strengthened ministry will allow us to plant brand new churches in the region in the years ahead.

I want to pay tribute to all the leaders across the All Saints' Network and at Holy Trinity for their cooperation in bringing this network together. It has been a massive piece of work, and I am confident will stand us in good stead to meet the mission challenges of the future, with creativity and courage. We have begun thinking about how these network models to resource ministry, especially in rural areas might be developed in other parts of the state, and I am meeting with a few of Rectors about the model every couple of months.

DIGITAL CHURCH

As many of you know 2019 is the Centenary Year of the Bush Church Aid Society. We have enjoyed a wonderful partnership with them over a very long period of time. Currently BCA supports our two new church plants in Brighton and the Southern Beaches, and also our ministries on King Island and the Furneaux Islands. Last year BCA invited applications for funding for special projects for their centenary year, and the Diocese of Tasmania was successful in securing funds for the Digital Church Project.

This project will help rural Parishes access leadership resources and teaching materials not always available to them. We have begun a pilot project in the Parish of Break O'Day, where sermons will be available on-line, as well as digital mentoring for the church leaders and small groups. BCA has funded the acquisition of some equipment and training resources. We have been working with the Ridley College Digital Content Manager to train local

videographers and digital content producers to see that the project will continue into the future.

We hope that after the trial other remote and under-resourced Parishes in the Diocese may be able to access these resources as well. We are very grateful to BCA for this partnership and will continue to monitor its progress. My hope is that this might be an offering that Tasmania could make to the wider Anglican Church of Australia for effective remote and rural ministry.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH ANGLICAN AGENCIES AND SCHOOLS

I am pleased to report that we have made good progress with aligning our Vision with Anglicare and the Anglican Schools. I recently attended a Board meeting of Anglicare, where the Diocesan Vision is a regular feature of their discussions. Bishop Chris Jones and I meet quarterly to talk about the work of Anglicare, and I know many Parishes have developed relationships with them, which have increased this year. The Anglicare Report on p 46 of the reports outlines some more of this relationship.

I have been meeting more regularly with the Principals of the three Anglican schools and their Boards. I have spoken to the staff at two of the schools about the Anglican identity of the school. I have been using the phrase “a life lived in response to Jesus Christ is commended in our Anglican Schools” to reinforce our distinctive place in the sector, and have been encouraging the schools to be more intentional about their engagement with Christian teaching and values at all levels of the school life, and these conversations are ongoing.

GROWING MISSIONAL CHAPLAINCY IN HOSPITALS, AGED-CARE FACILITIES AND PRISONS

It has been pleasing this year that Anglican Health and Welfare has increased its chaplaincy offerings by winning the contract to provide chaplaincy services at the North-West Regional Hospital in Burnie, and also to provide for a new Airport Chaplain at one day per week. Our chaplains are working at the coalface of mission in the community, and we are pleased to be working in partnership with them.

CLERGY MOVEMENTS

I think it is important to acknowledge in this Synod that The Revd Noel Bowditch and The Revd Trevor Smith have retired from ministry in the Diocese since we last met. We are particularly in Noel's debt for his leadership on Diocesan Council, the Bishop's nomination board, and other diocesan roles. We wish both Noel and Trevor well in their retirement and the ways they will contribute to our life in the next period of their ministry. In the next months we will also farewell to retirement, The Revd Alan Bulmer from Cressy and the Launceston General Hospital, The Revd Ross Ellwood from Northside, and The Ven Helen Philips from Howrah/Sandford. We will miss their contribution to our Synod and Diocesan life and wish them God's rich blessings in this next phase.

We also welcomed to the Diocese The Revd Phil Coghlan as Rector of Burnie and celebrated the ordinations of The Revds Mark Barry, Linda Chau, Alastair Crouch and Christoph Ochs to the Diaconate, and The Revds Jacob Crane, Tristan Dallas and Samuel Green to the Priesthood. It is so wonderful to have new ministry leaders among us.

THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Over the last 30 years the worldwide Anglican Communion has faced a number of challenges. Some parts of our denomination, especially in the West, have moved away from the scriptural moorings of the Anglican Church, and have revised their doctrine especially as it relates to the human person, marriage, and sexuality.

In 1998, the Lambeth Conference of Bishops gathered together to consider the bible's teaching on human sexuality. They agreed that the teaching of scripture was that marriage was between a man and woman, and that abstinence is right for those not called to marriage. The resolution that was passed acknowledged that same-sex attracted people were members of our church and assured them they were loved by God and committed to provide pastoral care and support for them. The Bishops went on to say that they could not support the blessing of same-sex unions, or the ordination of those involved in same gender unions.

By 2003, despite being implored not to act by the Instruments of Communion (the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates Meeting, and the Anglican Consultative Council), the Episcopal Church of the USA, had unilaterally rejected this agreement and consecrated a bishop in an active homosexual relationship and the Anglican Church of Canada had introduced a rite for the blessing of same-sex relationships. The Primates called these acts "a tear in the fabric of our Communion". They urged that proper oversight be provided for faithful Anglicans who did not agree with this revisionist agenda. This oversight was never provided.

Since that time, The Episcopal Church of the USA, The Anglican Church of Canada, The Scottish Episcopal Church, The Episcopal Church of Brazil, and The Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia have all now in various ways rejected the authority of the bible on human sexuality and marriage and have explicitly acted against the resolution of the Lambeth Conference in 1998. Many now regularly ordain and consecrate men and women who are living outside of the way the scriptures teach us to live, and many bless what God has called sin. All of these national churches now allow the marriage of same-sex couples, contrary to the teaching of scripture and the agreement of the Anglican Communion. The fabric of Communion continues to be torn by these actions.

In 2008, the Archbishop of Canterbury held the Lambeth Conference, and invited bishops who had rejected the 1998 resolution. Because of this invitation, and all the changes that had taken place, a conference was convened that same year in Jerusalem called the Global Anglican Future Conference. It was a conference of Anglicans of all traditions who continued to hold to the bible's authority in all matters. From it was spawned a movement of people who hold to, and promote, the historic and traditional teaching of Anglicanism,

and also provide fellowship and recognition for faithful Anglicans who had been left behind by the revisionist theology of their dioceses and provinces. This movement is now known as Gafcon from the conference acronym. It is important to note that Gafcon now represents 50 million of the world's 70 million Anglicans.

To maintain historic and orthodox Anglicanism, Gafcon has helped form and now recognises a new Province in the USA and Canada, called the *Anglican Church of North America*, a new Province in Brazil, and a new Diocese in New Zealand called the *Church of Confessing Anglicans Aotearoa New Zealand*. It has supported the establishment of a Mission organisation to reach England and has sponsored the consecration of a missionary bishop to Europe, including England and Scotland. These parallel jurisdictions, where multiple bishops serve in the same area, are not new to the Anglican Communion, but have existed for a long time in South Africa, in Europe and in other places. What we are witnessing is a reordering and realignment of the Anglican Church throughout the world in response to the revisionist theology of some of the member churches.

The issues of same-sex marriage are now under discussion in our own Church in Australia. The last General Synod requested the doctrine commission to provide essays on same-sex marriage to help our deliberations. These essays will be available this year, and clearly show two irreconcilable views on marriage in the Anglican Church of Australia. This will clearly need some careful discussion and discernment about the way forward for the Church. In light of this the Standing Committee recently deferred debate on the topic. Next year, instead of a normal session of General Synod, there will be a special meeting to consider legislation relating to the Royal Commission recommendations, followed by a conference on same-sex marriage, to try to work out a way forward for Australia. The General Synod representatives you elect this weekend, will attend those meetings.

In all of this we need to be pastorally sensitive. Whilst the actual issue is submitting to the authority of Scripture, the presenting issue is human sexuality. Our sexuality being such a personal thing, means that we have a pastoral responsibility to care and love all people regardless of their orientation. We want to be churches that welcome all people and help them to live out their discipleship in ways that honour God. We need to walk the sensitive line between the bible's revealed truth and the reality of the human condition, always bathed in love. I hope that the debate we have on these matters later in the Synod will be characterised in this way.

INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION

Last year, during our Lenten season of lament and repentance, we asked for forgiveness for our church's historic involvement in the treatment of the indigenous people of Tasmania. Repentance is always a turning from something (our sin) towards something else (to God and righteous living). I believe it is time we took a step from the sins of the past, towards a reconciled future in our relationships with indigenous Tasmanians.

During the early years of European settlement, a genocide took place in Tasmania. The new arrivals systematically murdered Aboriginal Tasmanians, stole their land for their own ends,

and rounded up the remaining people and moved them to Flinders Island. A now well-documented war took place on these islands, known as lutruwita by the palawa people. It all but wiped out a culture, a language, and destroyed relationships and lives.

While there were some bright moments among Anglicans, who stood up for the rights of the palawa, our church was complicit in this imperial slaughter of a race of people. All of us have benefitted materially from the dispossession of land from the original inhabitants. Every church building in Tasmania (not to mention our schools, homes and cities) stands on stolen land.

We read in Acts 17: 26 that "From one man [God] made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands." God, our God, gave lutruwita to the palawa people. He marked out these lands for them. The irony is that the British government wanted to punish petty thieves for stealing in England, by sending them to the other side of the world, to set up a settlement on land which they stole from another group of people.

As Christians we know that stealing is a sin. As Christians we of all people know that everyone is created in God's image and hold inherent dignity, regardless of race. As Christians, we of all people know that we have a responsibility to love and care for others who are different to us. As Christians we of all people are in the business of reconciliation.

Today I am calling on Anglicans across this state to get about the business of reconciling with the first peoples of these islands. We have taken some steps in the past. Bishop Harrower commissioned a book to be written called *God's own Country: The Anglican Church and Tasmanian Aborigines*, by James Boyce, which tells the story of our history with the palawa. I commend the book to you, as important background to our reconciliation work.

Some individual Parishes have already made efforts to meet their local aboriginal elders, and I commend this. Building relationships is at the heart of this process. It was great to see a small number of people at St David's Cathedral for the January 26 service this year, and a number of Anglicans at the Reconciliation Tasmania breakfasts. I hope that these events will be supported in growing numbers in the years ahead.

I am so pleased that we have a motion about Indigenous reconciliation in our meeting papers today. I hope it will result in lots of reconciling activity with support from others in the Diocese. I want to encourage your Parish, as a matter of priority, to have some formal acknowledgement of the traditional custodians, to build relationships and develop an understanding of the history and culture of First Tasmanians, and to seek to facilitate reconciliation. As a Diocese, we will be focussing on the steps we can take to move towards reconciliation in the best way possible.

LOOKING FORWARD

Our convictions continue to drive our Vision for this Diocese.

- *Jesus Christ is the head of the Church ...*
- *And He has sent us to make Disciples ...*
- *By Word, Prayer and Service ...*
- *Supported by fruitful godly Leaders ...*
- *God being our provider, and us stewards of His gifts*

He is calling us to be a Church for Tasmania, making disciples of Jesus. This is a noble calling, and he has promised his faithfulness to us.

Let us press on in that faithfulness to continue to build our network of flourishing parish centres that have disciple-making at their heart, ministry to young people and families, transformative worship, intentional prayer, a culture of safety, a commitment to world mission, and leadership from well-trained clergy.

Let us press on with our partnerships with Anglican Agencies and Schools, and to develop our missional chaplaincy, and in all these things to be a blessing to our communities.

A Church for Tasmania, Making Disciples of Jesus.

Richard Condie

June 2019