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THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF TASMANIA

HOBART | 31 OCTOBER 2020

¹ Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

² I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."

Psalms 91 has been a favourite in recent years, but its relevance was magnified in March this year when we first learned of the global coronavirus pandemic. Apart from assuring us that we rest in the shadow of the Almighty God, who is our refuge and fortress, verse 3 tells us: "Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence." It is not a guarantee that we will be spared from the pestilence of the pandemic, but a reminder that God cares for us, and our lives are eternally secure in his hands. It has been wonderful to experience this security and celebrate his shelter over this challenging year. God is indeed our refuge and fortress.

A DISRUPTION

As the year began, I had wanted challenge our accepted patterns of operation, to see how God might want us to be a different kind of church. I had the idea of pursuing a theme of "Getting Out of our Rut". It was partly inspired by watching the sheep in the Coal River Valley following well-worn ruts towards watering holes that had long since dried up in the drought. Often in the church we do the same old things, even though the well is dry, and no longer doing what we hoped it would. It struck me just as the sheep needed to find new paths to life-giving water, we might need to find some new paths for the refreshment of our mission and ministry in Tasmania as well.

Then Coronavirus hit, and we were forced out of our ruts in spectacular fashion. A total disruption to our familiar ways of being church, that had us recalibrating our path within the space of a week. Online church was rolled out, new pastoral care teams deployed, people being reached in new ways, and outreach to the community re-thought. I was so encouraged by the innovation and new paths that were charted. I want to put my thanks on record today to our clergy and lay leaders in Parishes who worked so hard to adapt. The load they carried was huge and the effort was amazing, and all of us are in their debt.

It wouldn't be right to miss acknowledging the work of Anglicare, our Schools, and our Chaplains through this period as well. Anglicare continued to provide front line services through the pandemic and were a vital link to many in our community. Even though they continued to work in close contact with many people, we are grateful to God that not a single worker was infected with the virus. Our Schools did an amazing job in adapting to new ways of teaching and learning, and we continue to enjoy our relationships with them. Our Chaplains were also on the front line of caring in our hospitals, aged care facilities and prisons. As you can imagine these were very stressful places during the height of the pandemic and we are so grateful for their ministry in these locations.

We have learned so much this year! About digital church, about the preciousness of Christian Community, about giving, about dependence, about the importance of communication, but most importantly about the gracious protection of our God over his church. Many things have changed and will continued changed in the years ahead as a result, but God remains the same forever.

OUR VISION

Our Vision is to be a church for Tasmania, making disciples of Jesus, and we have continued to pursue this over the last year, through:

- Building a network of confident flourishing Parishes
- Partnerships with Anglican Agencies and Schools
- Missional Chaplaincy in hospitals, aged-care facilities and prisons, and by
- Blessing our local communities

In light of this unusual year, I won't say much about these particular mission strategies, but I do want to give you an update on some other areas of the Vision. In 2019 we partnered with Sodra (a Christian consulting company) to work on our Vision and Strategic Plan and in November 2019 they worked with a group of leaders on the next steps of our Vision. We worked out that intensive work on four different areas will be required:

- Church Planting
- Our Leadership Pipeline
- Parish Effectiveness in disciple-making, and
- Strategic partnerships.

Some of our efforts in the areas have been hampered by the pandemic, but teams are working on developing strategic and tactical plans for each of these different strands.

Church Planting

Church Planting as a means of renewal, evangelism and kingdom growth will be key for us in the next season, and in some parishes, essential for future survival. While not every Parish in the Diocese will have the capacity to plant a fresh expression of church, a new congregation or a new church community, every Parish can play their part. We want to involve as many people as we can in praying, giving, partnering and sending people to plant congregations across the state. We believe this is an effective way we can see God reach Tasmanians for Christ and see disciples made.

This year we have seen the Southern Beaches Anglican plant make significant strides to maturity. The SALT Jordan Valley plant has been a little harder, but we are persevering and seeing some green shoots of growth. A new 4.30 congregation at St Clements in Kingston was launched just before the pandemic hit, and a couple of our churches have added extra congregations since the pandemic slowed.

The church planting working group has identified a number of places where we might hope to stimulate planting in the future and are currently working on a positive plan to invest in church planting growth in the years ahead.

Leadership Pipeline

To see forward momentum, we are going to need a strong community of leaders and it will be a sign of our health if these are grown from our own parishes and ministries here. This is a long-term project, as most leaders take 10-12 years to develop to independence. It begins

with our children's and youth ministries, which in turn will feed into our internships, and hopefully some of these will end up leading ministries in ordained and lay capacities.

During the year a couple of "consider ministry" events have been run, including an encouraging evening with a number of young adults from southern parishes being challenged down this pathway. We have been encouraged by the steady number of people offering for ordination. We currently have four candidates and seven active enquirers for ordination, with three coming to an advisory conference in November 2020, having had five in 2019. It has been pleasing to see the number of women enquiring about Ordination, and we are grateful for Ruth Hanlon's appointment as Ministry Development Officer for women this last year. We also have a quite a few people studying on-line at Ridley and a steady stream of people from interstate interested in ministry in Tasmania.

We have more work to be done on developing strategies for Parish Effectiveness and our Strategic partnerships and will report in due course.

CHALLENGES AND BLESSINGS

Diocesan Office

2020 turned out to be a challenging year for the Diocesan Office Team. With the financial pressures of COVID and the desire to cast a budget that was sustainable, the Diocesan Treasurer worked on a project to reduce the costs of the Diocesan administration by restructuring the office staff. This meant that a number of positions had to be made redundant, and a number of short-term contracts came to an end. While this was necessary and makes sense of the numbers, it is right to acknowledge the human cost of these decisions. We were sad to farewell a number of well-loved people from our Diocesan Office but have been reminded of God's faithfulness with appointments to new roles.

As you can imagine all of this has been quite a challenge for the Diocesan Staff and I want to thank the whole team for their good grace and collegial spirit as we have faced this together. We are a close-knit team and the losses have been keenly felt. In particular I want to thank James Oakley and Stephen Carnaby as they brought stability to the team.

Ministry Appointments

I wanted to share with you today the incredible kindness of God to us over this last year. In the midst of a pandemic, when we least could have expected it, God has raised up leaders for us in churches right around the state. By God's grace we have been able to fill quite a few parish and ministry vacancies since Synod last met. These include:

- Mr Nick Overton as Assistant Minister in Kingston
- Mr Rob Craft as Assistant Minister at Edge
- The Revd Jacob Crane as Rector of Northside
- The Revd Dub Gannon as Rector of Longford (and locum of Cressy)
- The Revd Clif McDonnell as Assistant at St David's Cathedral
- The Revd Ben Allen to the new Parish of the East Coast, (formerly Buckland and Swansea) to commence in Jan 2021

- The Revd Jamie Bester as Rector of Howrah/Sandford (inducted Wednesday just gone)
- The Revd David Rogers-Smith as Rector of Latrobe/ Port Sorell from January 2021
- The Revd John Tongue as Assistant at Holy Trinity Launceston in December
- Mr Christopher Waterhouse about to commence as City Minister at St David's Cathedral

And we have promising prospects for a new Assistant Minister in Sorell, Richmond and Tasman, and All Saints Launceston and Rectors for Wynyard and Devonport. It is quite remarkable that we have achieved these in the midst of such a difficult year. Please join me in giving thanks to God for his faithful provision.

OUR FUTURE

A few words about the future and what is ahead for us. Back in the distant past, when life seemed so much more uncertain, services times would be posted at the door of the church followed by the letters "D.V." standing for *Deo Volente*, meaning "God Willing". It reminded people of the teaching in Chapter 4 of the Letter of James, which have probably not had as much relevance to most of us, as they have in the last year.

¹³ Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."¹

We have been reminded of our utter dependence on God as we plan for the future, so please imagine a large watermark saying "DV" – "if the Lord wills it" over this next section.

Anglican - Aboriginal Relationships

I am so pleased that a group of people after last year's Synod have taken the responsibility of leading us in building relationships with the Aboriginal peoples of Tasmania. Please notice that we have stopped using the word "reconciliation" which implies the restoring of a pre-existing broken relationship and begun using the language of "relationship building". Aboriginal Tasmanians don't necessarily believe that there is a pre-existing relationship to be reconciled.

I want to commend the work of the Anglican-Aboriginal Relationship Working Group to you and ask you to support them by participating in the plans they are developing. Right now, study groups are in operation to help us begin to understand the issues. Next year there will be some Lenten reflections to guide us. But more importantly please make some effort to get to know the local Aboriginal communities in your part of Tasmania. We know from the scriptures (quoting from Acts 17) that 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

¹ The New International Version. (2011). (Jas 4:13–15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

lands.”² He gave these lands on which we meet to the palawa people, and we benefit daily from their forced dispossession from them.

It is a matter of biblical justice that we work towards better relationships, and that begins with understanding and educating ourselves. I commend the motion on the Business paper about these matters to you.

Redress

The Registrar will say more about Redress in his remarks later on in the Synod, but I wanted to make mention of it here. As you well know, we are deeply committed to Redress for survivors of sexual abuse in the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania. Since June last year we have paid out or committed to pay \$3.65 million under either the National Redress Scheme, civil litigations settlements or payments under the Pastoral Support and Assistance Scheme. We do so gladly, as a matter of justice to support and care for survivors of abuse. In addition, I have met with several survivors to offer personal responses in the form of an apology from the Church. These are difficult but important meetings as we help survivors on their road to healing.

The sale of property under the Redress Fund Ordinance has continued this year. Proceeds from these sales, levies on funds held by Parishes, and individual contributions, have enabled us to respond to the claims we have processed. The property sales are progressing, and I want to thank the Redress Team for the excellent way they have handled this very difficult part of our work. The sad business of closing and deconsecrating churches continues, and I thank Parishes for their grace in these times.

We noticed early this year that more and more survivors of abuse were turning to civil litigation against the church, rather than using the National Redress Scheme. Payments under civil litigation settlements are often much higher than payments under the Redress Scheme. The Diocesan Council re-engaged our actuaries this year to update our forecast liability, taking into consideration the higher instances of civil litigation. I have called together a Redress Fund Working Group to consider how we might meet this increased estimate of liability. We have yet to meet but will work on a plan to be put to the Synod in 2021. The Registrar will say a little more about this in his remarks.

Anglican Church of Australia

I wanted to say a few words about the Anglican Church of Australia. Last year the Dioceses of Wangaratta and Newcastle both passed legislation to allow for a liturgy for the blessing of same-sex marriages in their Dioceses. The Primate referred the matter to the Appellate Tribunal to determine if such liturgies were consistent with the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia and therefore could be used lawfully. The Appellate Tribunal is yet to make its ruling, but it is anticipated before the end of the year.

The General Synod will debate matters pertaining to same-sex marriage when it next meets. It was do so in June 2020, and at present hopes to meet in June 2021. I have made very clear that I believe any move to bless or endorse same-sex marriage within in the church is contrary

² The New International Version. (2011). (Ac 17:26). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

to the teaching of scripture and our Anglican formularies. This debate puts a lot of pressure on our bonds of fellowship in the national church. Please pray for the Primate and House of Bishops, the General Synod, and our own General Synod representatives that they will uphold the Bible's teaching in these matters as we move forward.

Parish Revitalisation

We will continue to focus on the work of revitalising parish ministry in the next few years. It has been wonderful to see a number of Parishes developing new life, with growing ministries especially to young people and families right across the Diocese. The New Ministry Development Fund continues to be well used providing grants for the growth of ministry in lots of contexts. In the North West we are investing in ministry in Circular Head, Wynyard and Latrobe; in the North at All Saints Launceston, and the Midlands; and in the South at the Edge Network. Each of these places has been enabled to grow ministry they could otherwise not have afforded without this assistance, and there are a number of other places and ministries in the pipeline to be funded in the next year or two. In addition, we are hoping to invest more in providing good quality digital resources to rural and remote Parishes across the Diocese. We hope that all of this will grow our vitality in making disciples.

Culture and Values

As our Diocesan Vision enters into its penultimate year, I want to signal that we need to do some thinking in the next year or two about Culture and Values to set us up for a strong future. In speaking about the importance of culture, the great management guru Peter Drucker is supposed to have said "culture eats strategy for breakfast". The point he was making was that a strong and deep culture will be more sustaining for organisational effectiveness than strategies alone. That is, we can have as many strategies as we like, but a deep culture of disciple-making will be necessary for the long-term trajectory of our Diocese.

Cultures are very important and take a long time to develop, and then once established are difficult to change. In my observation, many of our churches are now developing strategies for disciple-making, which is very good, but we have not yet made the deep cultural shifts. Unless we develop a deep DNA oriented towards discipling, we are unlikely to sustain the changes we have made. Culture making takes some thought and commitment and so I wanted to signal that we need to do this work in the next 12-18 months in preparation for the renewal of our Vision in 2022.

Along with this I believe we need to establish some aspirational values – these are the building blocks of culture. In our 2022 Vision we elected to articulate "Convictions" rather than values, as we thought that what was valued might not take us to where we needed to be. We now need to work on some values that we can aspire to, to carry us on. Again, this is going to need some work, but wouldn't it be wonderful if every Anglican deeply valued things like courage, generosity, humility, service to be the bedrock of everything that we do.

Jesus' great commission for us is to make disciples of all the nations, and we must have a deep and burning desire for those who don't yet know Christ. This must bubble up from deep within us, if we are to sustain and grow our commitment to disciple-making in the years ahead. If the

idea of talking about Culture and Values is of interest to you, then please be in contact with me.

Fixing our Eyes on Jesus

We have learned well this year that in human plans the future is far from certain. But it is also true that the future is as certain as the promises of God. He is faithful, and he has called us to follow him, and has promised eternal security in his presence. As we have heard, Psalm 91 says: "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty."

As the world around us faces increasing uncertainty, and as we face all kinds of challenges that we have never faced before, we need a steady certain trust in God. I can think of no better advice than I gave to a friend of mine just the other day, who is facing the end of his life. It comes from the Letter to the Hebrews chapter 12

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.³

My brothers and sisters, engaged in this glorious ministry of Jesus here in Tasmania, as we seek to be a Church for Tasmania, doing everything we can to make disciples of the Lord Jesus, as we run this race, would you join me in fixing our eyes on Jesus, who is the one who has gone before us, and who secures our faith.

To him be the glory in the Church.

Richard Condie
Bishop of Tasmania
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³ The New International Version. (2011). (Heb 12:1–2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.