

Second Ordinary Session of the 44th Synod of the Diocese of Sydney: October 1997

Presidential Address

By the Most Reverend R.H. Goodhew, Archbishop of Sydney Monday 13 October 1997.

Thanks Be to God

Listen to the Psalmist.

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.¹

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – ²

To acknowledge God's mercy in glad thanksgiving is, for us, both a duty and a privilege. To celebrate God's work through his people in every area of life may well be our most potent defence against the modern danger described by David Wells when he wrote,

“The public sphere, dominated as it is by the omnipresence of bureaucracy, systems of manufacturing, the machinery of capitalism, and the audible confetti spewing out of countless radios and televisions, makes it virtually impossible to think that in *this* world God has any meaningful place.”

Therefore I begin this session of our Synod by celebrating the activity of God in our midst, affirming for ourselves and for the world about us, that God certainly has a meaningful place in this loud and busy world of ours. The importance of this exercise cannot be overemphasised. External sources take pleasure in portraying the church as an institution in decline. Internally, some chant a litany of woe. Both are wrong. To stir your heart let me lead you briefly through some of those aspects of the life of our diocese for which we have reason to praise God, to be thankful and to persevere.

1997 has been a year of celebration. We have taken our part in the sesquicentenary celebrations of the formation of new dioceses in Australia in 1847. We marked this by a National Service in St. Andrew's Cathedral, by holding a magnificent *Prom Praise* in the Sydney Town Hall, and by hosting a splendid visit from The Most Rev George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England and his wife Eileen.

I was delighted to have opportunity to show the Archbishop some of the impressive work in ministry and caring carried on in the diocese, and to introduce him to as many people as possible, including a large number of the leading citizens of this city. I know he particularly enjoyed his meeting with the clergy, and his visit to Moore College.

The *Prom Praise* on Saturday 2nd August was a wonderful occasion. Those who planned, and those who participated in the celebration, gave us all a splendid chance to sing together with praise and thanksgiving. The capacity crowd in the Sydney Town Hall on that evening could not contain their delight and enjoyment.

I also take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Howard Dillon and his staff for the production of the colourful and informative publication *Anglicans Celebrate 150 Years*. Never intended as a serious history, its pages nonetheless outline a number of the magnificent achievements and ministry of the diverse agencies of this diocese. Many rank and file church members have expressed their delight at receiving a copy and have passed them on to others.

Whilst 1847 is an important date in the history of this diocese we remember that Christian ministry has been known on these shores from the time of European settlement in 1788. Thus Richard Johnson arrived with the First Fleet. Our Anglican presence in Sydney began with those first settlers, reluctant pioneers though they may have been.

In 1836, when William Grant Broughton was consecrated bishop Sydney became the See city, the centre of ministry in Australia. Later with the establishment of the new dioceses of Adelaide, Melbourne and Newcastle in 1847, Broughton became Bishop of Sydney. Over all those years God has been pleased to call men and

women to himself, and to give his church in the diocese a desire to serve Him in wholehearted devotion and faithfulness to His Word.

As a consequence, we the people of the diocese of Sydney have come to be known for our independence of mind throughout the world of Anglicanism. We are also known for our fidelity both to the essential tradition of the Church and to the Scriptures, and to the God and Saviour who has revealed himself in Christ and through the word of Scripture. We have as well, inherited and continue a tradition of gospel preaching which offers all who hear a clear exposition of the Scriptural doctrine of salvation through faith only and an invitation to respond. This is our great treasure, it is a fidelity which God has blessed. We will let this go at our peril. We must continue to teach the whole counsel of God.

I have just returned from the U.S.A. where I and two other bishops from Australia conferred with a group of some 50 brother bishops and archbishops from around the world on issues to be discussed at Lambeth and to offer support to theologically conservative bishops in the American Episcopal Church. I have returned more deeply convinced than ever of the role that this diocese has in the life of the worldwide Anglican Communion if we will exercise our influence with humility and candour.

There are numerous voices in Christian Churches today, not just Anglican circles, who appear to have allowed the spirit of this age to shape their understanding of Scriptural teaching and to have permitted the development of attitudes and endorsements far removed from a disciplined appreciation of the word of Scripture. This can be found in many areas; for example, a blurring of the distinctiveness of salvation through Christ crucified, risen and ascended into an acceptance of a range of alternative pathways to God; or an understanding of human sexuality which allows an acceptance of wide freedom in lifestyle choices, and endorses concepts of same-sex marriage and family life which are acceptable to many of our age but are well removed from Scripture and traditional Church teaching. We must stand graciously yet resolutely for that truth which God has revealed.

We can rejoice that it is part of the character of our church that it has divided the world into dioceses, placed a bishop in each with responsibility for mission and ministry, and charged him to ordain ministers to carry forward the cause of the gospel. Consequently our diocese is a unit divided in some 270 parochial units. It is in these units that the major part of the ministry of the diocese is exercised. It is in the life of these parishes that we have so much for which to give praise to God.

We have vigorous, gospel centred ministry in our parishes and there is much fruit which is gathered quietly into the congregational life of our churches. Though some parishes are not prepared to submit attendance figures, and that is a great pity, it would appear that there has been an increase in those attending church over the last five years. In 1991 the figure was approximately 46,000. In 1996, as best as we can tell, the figure was 48,000. This represents a growth rate of around 4.5%.

There are other indicators which give reason for thankfulness. Given the commitment in the Diocese to the proclamation of the Gospel it is encouraging to see the National Church Life Survey figures dealing with Newcomers. The Survey distinguishes between those who have returned to church life after a long absence and described as 'Returnees', and those who have had no church background at all called 'First-Timers'. In the Diocese 5% of attenders were returnees and a further 4% were first-timers making a total of 9%. This compares with a total of 8% for all Anglicans and 7% for All Attenders throughout Australia.

Whilst there is no room for complacency, the results suggest that congregations in the Diocese are having some success in encouraging others from outside the church to join them. In addition, many people who have not attended for a number of years have been encouraged to return to congregational life. This is reason for thankfulness and an encouragement to continue reaching out.

Low levels of young attenders is a critical issue for the ongoing life of any church because of the implications that magnify over time. The age profile in this Diocese is younger than most of the national Church but still older than the wider community. For example the proportion of 20-29 year old attenders in this Diocese is 15% of the total of all attenders as compared with 11% for all Attenders in Australia and 8% for All Anglicans.

This pattern could be explained in part by the resources that the Diocese has committed to youth ministry over a long period with many innovative and productive ministry initiatives. The importance of this issue is highlighted further by National Church Life Survey research which makes clear connections with the inflow of newcomers on the one hand, and the ministry to youth on the other. While recognising how much we have yet to do, it would be wrong not to give thanks and to take heart from the facts displayed in this aspect of the Survey.

From a strategic point of view the issue of congregational size is very important. Clearly there is the question of a critical mass in the life of a congregation and those that are too small face issues of long term viability. In

our diocese the average congregation size is 126 compared with a national average of 71 and an Anglican average of 57.

A review of the number of congregations with less than 50 people reveals that one quarter of congregations in this Diocese are in this category compared with over half in the national Church.

Once more, while there are grounds for thankfulness, it must be borne in mind that our diocese does not face the issues of rural ministry that are faced by many other denominations.

If it is true that spiritual nurture is advanced by people's participation in small groups, we can take some further encouragement from the indications given in the Survey concerning involvement in groups for prayer and Bible study. Over half of all our church attenders are now involved in a group of this sort.

To some extent this may be offset by the fact that we are less involved in social or fellowship groups which can be valuable places for making contact and pre-evangelism.

We would all wish for 'bigger' and 'greater' in our basic work in our parishes. However it would be wrong not to take delight in what God has been pleased to do in our midst. Men and women young and old are being won to Christ and seeking to live their lives for him in a climate that is not conducive to disciplined Christian commitment. Let us always thank God for each and all who are his people, remembering before Him their work produced by faith, their labour prompted by love, and their endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Beyond the fundamental work done in the parishes there is a staggering range of additional ministries which give lie to the assertions of those who want to promote the idea that the church is nigh unto death and that collapse is imminent.

There is vigorous and fruitful work undertaken amongst students and staff on the campuses of the various universities in the diocese. Our University Colleges provide accommodation and the opportunity for college members to both see and hear the Christian gospel.

In the State Primary and Secondary Schools in this diocese, a team of nearly 2,700 well equipped people, volunteers, clergy, youth workers, and religious education teachers, regularly teach about 121,000 young people in Religious Instruction classes. This is a wonderful ministry, and though we are only able to service 52% of schools in the State, we must thank God for those who work in this field. It must be one of the most significant opportunities open to us for contacting young people.

In our Church Schools, Chaplains and Christian staff seek to present Christ to young women and men. There is a growing sense of the strategic nature of these schools for both intellectual and spiritual development.

In addition to the work carried on in our Schools, our recently restructured Children's and Youth Unit maintains effective relationships with State and Federal authorities on educational matters and publishes, successfully, material for Christian education.

In parishes and extra parochial activities there is a wide range of effective work in progress amongst children, young people and their families. Parish youth groups, G.F.S., the Anglican Boys Society, Camp Howard, Horizon Educational Camps, Camp Challenge, all these and many others, are ministries promoted by the new Anglican Youth and Education Unit which, as a new fresh organisation, must receive significant support from this Synod for its vital work.

Further, we are no longer the English at Church abroad, an Anglo-Saxon Church with ministry to just one segment of our population. We are an Australian Church and diocese, with very lively cross-cultural ministries and a large number of ethnic congregations, including many Chinese. We are privileged to offer the Christian gospel to all Australians regardless of racial and ethnic origins, social position or financial status.

I believe we give a lead to this aspect of ministry in the Anglican Church of Australia. No other diocese displays the same vigour in this area. There are many committed people throughout our diocese eager to assist with cross-cultural work, and there are already something like 1,000 people involved as learners in Anglican ESL classes. There are 12 active Chinese congregations in the diocese and the Anglicare cross-cultural team have been involved in evangelistic outreach amongst Cambodians, Vietnamese, Turkish, Iranian, Spanish and Arabic speaking people as well as the Chinese. Congregations have been commenced among first generation immigrants. Many parishes are engaged in ESL classes and outreach work among particular ethnic groups in their community.

It is interesting to note that third generation newcomers to Australia tend to nominate the Anglican church as their denomination. Some work carried out by the Australian Immigration Research Centre reveals that there is a strong move to Anglicanism by second and third generation migrants. For example, of first generation Indians 3.8% nominated themselves in the National Census as Anglican, whereas 23% of third generation Indians resident in Australia claimed affiliation with the Anglican Church. Similarly 2% of first generation Chinese and 22% of third generation Chinese nominated themselves as Anglican. To some extent this may reflect an assimilation process occurring however it provides some encouragement that the Anglican Church at a nominal level is a conscious choice of many people. This also means that we should not assume that people from other nationalities won't be open to the gospel as we bring it to them.

Beyond the local church is the work of the 23 full time and 3 part time Chaplains who minister in our hospitals and gaols. They touch people at a crucial moment in their lives. The prison chaplains seek to help people in prison to find Christ and offer assistance to those exiting gaol to make a new future for themselves.

The Home Mission Society, the longstanding mission and caring arm of the diocese, has undergone a recent name change as a way of giving itself a higher profile in the community. Anglicare, as it is now called, continues programs of outreach and care in the Name of Christ, barely matched anywhere else in the Communion. The services provided range over a wide spectrum of human need: the young, the handicapped, those in need, the frail aged, as well as assisting parishes in their mission and outreach.

Moore College and Deaconess House, recently renamed Mary Andrews College, are two great causes for thanksgiving. Here there is consistent achievement and excellence of labour in theological training. In Moore College we have an institution which is world renowned for the quality of its theological teaching, research and writing. Mary Andrews College has offered ministry preparation to women for work in the diocese and beyond since 1891. It seeks imaginatively to resource women in parishes to improve their theological learning, ministry skills, and personal spiritual growth.

We must continue to give thanks for the encouraging supply of people seeking to be trained for ministry and pray that God will continue to raise up suitable people.

We are able to rejoice in the resources available in the diocese for counselling those in need of assistance both in marriage enrichment, problem solving, and a range of other personal issues.

Our Department of Evangelism provides a significant service in making available gifted evangelists. Parishes are able to draw on a variety of tools to assist in outreach.

We cannot ignore the professional and dedicated work and skills of all those who work from St Andrew's House in the Diocesan Secretariat, in Finance and Administration, Secretarial, Investing, Accounting, Information Systems Division; or those in Anglican Media in its media relations, publishing, radio and television work; or the hardworking and committed staff of the Archbishop's Appeals Unit.

The imaginative Ministry Training Scheme and its recruiting arm Club 5 originating from St Matthias' Centennial Park, leads young people into a two-year apprenticeship program of ministry training. The School of Christian Studies emanating from Robert Menzies College supplies quality biblical and theological training and offers the fruit of evangelical scholarship to the reading public.

The variety of work which has grown up in the diocese and is an expression of its life goes on and on: Winning Men, Mothers Union, Cursillo, Kairos, Emmaus Walk, Bible Study Fellowship and Alpha, the Anglican Retirement Villages, Chesalon, Hope Health Care and the Hammond Homes.

There are organisations which operate because of the commitment of church members, CMS, ABM, BCA, SAMS, Bible Society, Scripture Union and others too numerous to name. There is the dedication of those determined to make sport and the 2000 Olympics serve the cause of Christ.

Like the writer to the Hebrews "what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell" of all the great and merciful things God is doing in our midst.

This brief overview is no cause for pride, complacency or triumphalism. It simply serves to remind us powerfully of the many gracious things God is doing in spite of our shortcomings, and how many reasons we have for heartfelt praise and genuine optimism.

It provides grounds to assert that God does have a profoundly meaningful place in this busy world of ours.

What About Australia?

What can be said about the environment in which we function? Secularism and modernity are certainly alive and well in Australia but recent surveys reveal some interesting statistics. Information gathered from a number of different sources tends to give little support to the notion that Australians are all atheists with no interest in spiritual matters.

The National Social Science Survey of 1993 revealed that of Australians generally 30% "Believe in God with no doubts", 31% "Believe in God, but have doubts" and a further 18% "Believe in a higher power". Only 13% responded that they do not know and did not believe there was a way to find out, with another 9% saying they did not believe in God.

In this same survey 45% of the respondents believed that the Bible was the word of God.

43% of the community claimed to pray at least monthly.

This data suggests that around half of the population are open to, and are actively seeking, spiritual connections in their day-to-day life even though less than 20% of the population actually attend regular church activities. The 1996 Census revealed that in our so called "Post Christian" media driven society most people in the community still claim allegiance to a Christian church.

Nearly three quarters of Australians still choose to define themselves as Christian. This ought to provide every encouragement for us to build connections with them and find appropriate ways to introduce them to Christ. In addition we ought not to give up too quickly on those 'historic' Anglicans who have not as yet given up on describing themselves as such.

Our Prime Minister commented some time ago that developing an appropriate response to native title will be one of the main challenges facing Australia in 1997. Unfortunately we have as yet failed to meet the challenge. In the aftermath of the Wik decision the historic relationship of co-existence between pastoralists and indigenous Australians has been jeopardised by near hysterical and ill-informed claims. Obviously some uncertainty exists about the consequences of Wik. But let us not forget that our indigenous brothers and sisters have lived with uncertainty for more than 200 years.

As a Christian I cannot countenance extinguishment of Native Title. A biblical commitment to justice and compassion will ensure that the needs of those most likely to be disadvantaged will first be met. This does not mean that justice be denied to others but if justice is to be done the needs of indigenous Australians are paramount.

I am convinced that the only way forward, and a way that has proven successful in the past, is that of continuing negotiation between the stakeholders, particularly pastoralists and Aborigines. We must resist the temptation for 'quick fix' solutions. I urge the federal government not to opt for a simplistic legislative response that favours clarity over justice, and predictability over compassion.

In addition, we have yet, as a nation, to deal adequately with the findings of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Report on the "Stolen Generation". Until the pain and confusion highlighted in that Report is addressed we will remain a Nation in tension.

I take this opportunity to inform Synod that the proposal from the Standing Committee to set up the Aboriginal Ministry Trust immediately, rather than allocating portions of the full \$1.2 million over four years, has my full support. My Aboriginal Advisory Panel has been consulted so that we are avoiding imposing a strategy for the Trust onto our Aboriginal advisers from outside their milieu and experience.

Earlier in this address I referred to the very fine work done in this diocese in multi-cultural ministry. There is one other matter which calls for comment. Knowing that some of our congregation members sometimes experience racist taunts and abuse in the community, I ask us all, do we speak out loudly enough against such actions? Remember silence may give an impression of approval and consent.

I mentioned this matter in my Synod address last year. There were quite a few comments afterwards. I received some letters from people who accused me of turning away from our Anglo-Celtic and Christian heritage. There were quite a number of racist comments in those letters.

But there were also signs that many of our ethnic members of Anglican congregations were encouraged and supported by the comments. One man wrote to *Southern Cross*, "I was so encouraged to hear Archbishop Goodhew speak out against racism from a biblical point of view... I am Chinese born, but an Australian citizen. But

I am foremost a member of God's Kingdom... I do speak of personal experience of racism here in Sydney. It has, of recent days, become worse. It was a great thing to see Christians daring to speak out against popular views, reminding society somewhat prophetically that the values of God's Kingdom seek the best of others first." ³

I don't know how many of you read the article which appeared in the same edition. It quoted one of our Anglicare staff who works in Cabramatta. Xuyen Tang, herself Vietnamese, said "...Many elderly people are afraid to walk on the streets, because of the racist attacks or slurs. A friend of one of our clients was slapped in the face for no reason...One of my staff, who speaks Indonesian, was abused at Ashfield by someone who called out 'Asian pig.' Another staff member who speaks Vietnamese, was hit repeatedly by a little girl, who said "I hate you, I hate you." My husband was abused when he parked his car at Blacktown. A man swore at my husband and said, "Get back to where you come from." She concluded "Our aim now should be to work together as Australians from many backgrounds to create a better nation. I am comfortable with Australia as my country. It is not colour that counts, but the heart."⁴

I repeat we must always remember that silence can be seen to imply consent. On behalf of our Asian brothers and sisters we must take every opportunity to speak against racist attitudes in our society. While we have a right to value the heritage of the past, to preserve its good and bring it forward with us into the present, we must be determined in our opposition to anything in our society which we count as contrary to gospel values. Scripture clearly teaches that each person, regardless of their race, is made equally in the image of our loving Creator, and in the household of faith, 'we are all one in Christ Jesus.' Our own Christian fellowship must reflect this truth at every level, so there will be a welcome for all. We must fight against every sign of racial injustice in our community, since, again, biblical teaching urges us to go beyond mere tolerance and to welcome the sojourner within our gate.

Issues We Face Together

There are a number of issues which I now wish to address which are important elements of our life together.

The Ministry of Women

The role of women in the life of our churches still continues as a matter of concern for many. The National Church Life Survey revealed a perception that ministries traditionally belonging to women are not supported as well as the traditionally male dominated areas. In particular, this involved areas of ministry such as Playgroups, GFS, and Primary SRE. For example 68% of GFS leaders and 71% of playgroup leaders felt "Low to Neutral" recognition and 24% of GFS leaders and 17% of playgroup leaders considered their work to be "Very Poorly Supported".

Along with the need to give proper recognition and support to all the work undertaken by volunteers in a local church, we need to be aware of the particular challenges felt by women. Last year we debated a Bill that would have permitted women to be made priests but not placed in charge of parishes. That Bill was defeated. The issue of women priests will, I believe, come before us again in this session. Any decision taken in this house either permitting or withholding from women the opportunity to be priests will leave a substantial minority unhappy both in this house and in the diocese itself. Our aim is to know and do the will of God; nothing more, nothing less. Whether the form of debate which operates in this chamber is the best method for the church in the diocese to arrive at a common mind concerning God's will on this important matter, or makes possible the formation of some arrangement which might be mutually acceptable to all concerned, is itself debatable. I do have a suggestion to offer to the Synod when we come to this question on the Agenda. Beyond this I note that while it is the policy of the diocese to licence women deacons to preach, a function which may only take place with the Rector's consent, there is a growing concern that some would wish to restrict this ministry to women and children. There is debate and divided opinion about the way in which Scripture is to be applied with respect to women preaching and teaching in the congregation. Competently trained women have for years exercised preaching and teaching ministries in our diocese. It would seem important that this policy of the diocese be understood and acknowledged even though some hold the opinion (even strongly) that this should be restricted to women and children. While we continue to consider what the mind of God is on this matter for our times, we need to recognise that we have educated and theologically trained women who must be allowed to minister where they are called to do so. The questioning of this creates a climate which undermines confidence among our women ministers. They already contend with the lack of tenure and the insecurity associated with assistants' positions. While this debate continues let it be carried on with courtesy and respect for the feelings of all.

The question of women in the episcopate will be a subject for debate at the forthcoming General Synod. This has the prospect of generating even greater divisions than the decision to make women priests. I earnestly pray that God may grant wisdom and light to all who participate in those discussions.

Issues of Sexuality

There is growing pressure both in the community and in some sections of the wider church to recognise the legitimacy of same sex unions and to approve the ordination of practising homosexuals. I do not believe that I am homophobic, however I do believe that such practices are contrary to the will of God as taught in Scripture. While I am bound to love those who differ from me on this issue, and bear no one any ill will, I want to make it clear that so long as I am the bishop of the diocese no such practices will gain my support. I am aware that statements like this are often perceived as judgemental and unloving. I know that many individuals and families struggle with situations that are painful and isolating. I have no desire to add to those difficulties. I do believe however that we are in danger of being tempted to abandon the Scripture's clear message about the nature of sexuality and its functioning.

Music and Today's Church

One of the interesting things to come out of National Church Life Survey research is that 46% of attenders in the Diocese prefer hymns and 48% prefer contemporary music. The scales are now evenly balanced on this issue. We have become aware of the importance of music in contemporary church life and the figures reveal that the trend to contemporary worship styles is not an overnight phenomenon but in fact a transition. It also suggests that in many ways we are operating as two churches largely divided along pre and post war cultural expectations.

Pressure Upon Clergy

The present plethora of studies, books, programs and conferences focused on clergy stress, witnesses to an issue of widely felt concern. Certain realities must be faced. Given the nature of our times some candidates for ministry will inevitably come from domestic backgrounds which have known brokenness and instability. In some cases this may entail some measure of personal fragility. Even without that particular feature, uncertain times have the capacity to make all of us less effective in facing tension and stress.

Expectations for clergy performance have heightened. In the face of widespread secularism and post modernism the challenge to succeed and to be seen to succeed can be daunting. That some do succeed remarkably, increases the pressure felt by others. Expectations are imposed both externally and internally. What leaders, peers and parishioners generally think is success, is internalised by individual ministers regardless of personal gifts and/or the areas in which ministries are exercised. Even where priorities are well balanced and efforts are strategic and appropriate, outcomes vary for any number of reasons. Individual clergy reactions can vary from increased authoritarianism, through frustration, to the silent despair of inner capitulation. Spouses too suffer in this process.

In a large diocese like ours the phenomenon described by C.S. Lewis as "The Inner Ring" easily operates. Some clergy feel, and indeed may be made to feel 'on the outside'. Lack of acceptance, implied or practised, or a perception of any such lack, can generate the shadows of diminished personal worth or the fumes of hostile antagonism.

Ministry and personal worth are closely tied together in the life of the clergy and their spouses. I ask you to value them highly for their work's sake, and more so, because they are fellow sinners saved by grace alone. We are greatly blessed in the men and women, and spouses, who serve the people of our diocese. I am proud to be their bishop. Like all of us, none is above making mistakes, nor beyond displaying those weaknesses and tendencies to which we are all prone. Laity can rightly expect from them that measure of humility which will accept necessary counsel and correction. Where such is offered, it must be offered in genuine love and with a matching humility of spirit. As a diocesan family we should pray for those in full-time ministry and I commend them to your prayers and affection.

The Life and Ministry of the Laity

While drawing attention to the pressures felt by clergy I am also aware of the great pressures experienced by many church members, and their families, as they endeavour to live out their obedience to Christ in today's society. Data from the National Church Life Survey suggests that there is stress being experienced by those in their 30's and 40's as they try to maintain families, involvement in congregational life and also other networks in our fragmented society. This fragmentation means that instead of being central to community the Church is often operating more on the margins. Those with young families probably experience the tensions of this more than any other age group. It may have always been thus but my sense is that conflicting demands on that group of people places them under considerable stress. Given that they are a key resource to our ongoing

ministry, carrying out many of the key administrative and teaching roles in our congregations, it is important for them to be valued and encouraged in those ministries.

We must continue to affirm that the lay people are the church. Neither bishops, priests or deacons are the church. In the best sense those officers are members of the *laos* of God. Their sole distinction lies in the call of God and the church to be servants to the people. Their service is for the spiritual well-being of God's people and for the advancement of the gospel in the community.

It is a mistake to focus the ministry of the laity solely within the life of the congregation. Gifts and talents are given to be exercised within the fellowship, but Christians inhabit more than one world and God equips them to serve him in every situation. The home and family with its network of relationships, the workplace, the institutions where people study, the communities in which people live, where they play, and this nation in which we all share, each are worlds in which we have influence and responsibilities. The church is in the world as 'salt' and 'light', which means, God's people as individuals are in the world as 'salt' and 'light'. The responsibility we all have, under God, is to be witnesses to him and his glory in deed and word wherever he has placed us.

The home must be the prime location for nurture in the life of faith and love, and for the formation of strong, purposeful and balanced human beings. That is an absolutely vital and strategic ministry area. Fail there and we fail significantly. The networks which link family members are significant channels of gospel communication.

Unless Christians see the situations in which they spend the bulk of their time as significant areas of service for God, they will be doomed to frustration and unfruitful living. Every area of life must be the theatre in which God's people display and declare his glory.

Synodical Government

This synod gives expression to the nature of the church in the diocese. It is comprised of the bishop and his associates, the priests with a few deacons, and, as the majority, representatives of the people of God. Together we take counsel for what we believe is best for the life of the church in the diocese. We gather as the Anglican expression of the church in Sydney. We are all members of the one family expressing our life in separate yet united parishes and congregations. This needs to be borne in mind when individuals feel irked by what, at times, seems to them like very slow progress on a particular issue. To discount the Synod and its processes, either because some think it is too large, or feel it moves too slowly, or consider it is the domain of a few dominant speakers, or are concerned that the majority without specific theological training can, unless the clergy exercise their veto, overrule those with more specific training, is to fracture our fellowship and cause us to neglect one another.

A contribution made in "the colonies" was the development within Anglicanism of the idea and place of a biblically literate laity playing its full part in the consensual decisions of the Church. The strong voice of the laity is a mark of the diocese of Sydney.

We are a big church. We fellowship in many localities. We meet in this forum to signal our unity and to work out how we do Christ's business together. Though sometimes tedious, Synod expresses something vital to our life together. I hope no one will be persuaded to bypass this forum. We need people who push the edges and are innovative. Without that we will fossilise. We also need fellowship and patience. Without that we will disintegrate.

Innovation and Fellowship

The elements of innovation and fellowship face each other in the development of church planting in other dioceses and other parishes within this diocese. The initiatives in other dioceses present particular challenges to our unity within the wider church. Church planting across parish borders in our own diocese brings the associated tensions very much into our own backyard.

No one would want to do anything but applaud initiatives which win to Christ people who previously have stood right outside the kingdom. Even a church of 300 in a parish of 30,000 has more on its hands than it can really manage. Our first desire is to see people converted and built up in Christ by every means. Yet there are issues to be considered. As bishop of the diocese it is my responsibility to see that ministry is exercised and regulated within the diocese. When I appoint those of you who are incumbents to your cure of souls I authorise you to carry out your ministry in a particular area and consequently to a defined group of people. Whilst recognising that modern urban and suburban life is not susceptible to neat geographic packaging and that there will be substantial overlaps, this pattern of operating nevertheless has the strength of making someone

responsible for every part of the diocese. The initiatives taken, by people connected with one Parish, to create new churches from small groups meeting in various parts of the diocese represent an imaginative approach to the evangelisation of the unchurched. However, the manner in which some of these new endeavours have been initiated has resulted in hurt to the ministers and congregations already present in those areas. I want to support efforts that reach those yet unreached and I ask incumbents not to be too rigid in their response to new initiatives. I also want to say to those giving leadership in these new ventures that you have responsibilities too within the fellowship of the church in the diocese. We are not unrelated and independent churches. When writing to the Corinthians Paul expressed, albeit obliquely, strong negative feelings about those who encroached on another man's area of evangelistic responsibility.⁵ Amongst us, a commonly shared passion for mission and a godly regard for the spiritual and evangelistic responsibilities allocated to each minister and church in the diocese, ought to be able to produce, with the exercise of courtesy, mutual respect, and co-operation, patterns of operation which are acceptable and beneficial to all. Sisters and brothers, we are a family. We are a fellowship embarked on a common endeavour. We are not competitors.

Relationships Within The Diocese

In 1992 Archbishop Robinson said to the Synod,

We are the Diocese of Sydney, and our calling is to be the church of God which is at Sydney under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We are too large to gather weekly as a single assembly yet our relation to Sydney means something.

The intense focus of more recent years on the single local congregation or parish has produced a great deal of good. However some loss has occurred in a diminished sense of our corporate life as the church in the diocese. In this latter emphasis the strong and the weak care for each other, love one another, and work to advance each other's cause in our common mission and calling. I hope that we can be more conscious of each other and draw strength from an increasing sense of common life. In God's family we accept one another not because we like, but because we are, warts and all.

Looking to the Future

I wish to conclude this presentation by looking to the future. Our goal is to win an ever increasing number of people to faith in Christ. We are responsible for the maintenance and growth of all those who are part of the church in the diocese. As God's light and salt we have a role to play in showing his love and character throughout our society.

Therefore let me suggest the following:

First we need to maintain appropriate continuity. There are things which make us what we are; things we dare not surrender. We are a church. Christ calls us to be something, a something we cannot abandon and still be his people. That continuity I have sought to express in the goals of being observably God's people, pastorally effective, evangelistically enterprising, genuinely caring, and dynamically Anglican. The first commits us to the continuing pursuit of true godliness in public and private: the second to all that is involved in the task of bearing one another's burdens: the third to continuing evangelism by all, and in all ways: the fourth to love of neighbour and of enemy in all arenas of life: the fifth to express those four commitments within the framework of the faith and practice expressed in our Constitution, that is, the Creeds, the Bible, the dominical Sacraments, the threefold Ministry, and the doctrinal authority of the Book of Common Prayer, the Ordinal, and the Thirty Nine Articles.

There may well be other elements which are uniquely ours as Anglican Christians which if surrendered would rob the world and the church of something of great value. For example, our Diocesan and parish system. This is not a feature of all Christian fellowships, but is our declaration that we plan to minister to everybody everywhere. We do not only locate our witness where it is most welcome or most enthusiastically received. We seek to be in every place for every person. Is that not a core value for us? Subject to honest subscription to our declared theological norms, we have permitted a liberty of thought and practice within those norms. Is that a core value? We have hitherto considered that some similarity in the content of public worship in our separate churches is desirable. Is that a core value? We have nurtured Christians by the regular use of certain elements of Scripture and theology. Is that a core value?

We must not be bound by what will not advance our basic mission. Neither, however, should we surrender those things which are our particular strengths and which provide reasons why people chose to live out their Christian experience in our fellowship. We must wrestle together for sound answers to these questions. To confuse the unchangeable with the changeable and the changeable with the unchangeable is to court failure.

Second, we can affirm every positive achievement which bears the touch of God's approval. I repeat, we are a large church. There are a multiplicity of wonderful stories in the life of the diocese past and present. Those stories come both from our parishes and our organisations. We must continue to celebrate what God is doing in the diversity of work bearing his Spirit's impress. Evangelism, instruction, care, community involvement, the arts, literature, government, the law, the unions, medicine, business: we must celebrate God's work through his people in every area of life lest we capitulate to the situation described by David Wells that I quoted earlier, where it is

“virtually impossible to think that in *this* world God has any meaningful place.”

We sell ourselves, God, and other people short, if we do not rejoice in what he is doing, and fail to affirm all that is good.

Third, to do our task well we can and must continue to innovate: home, local church, diocese, national church. Not to do so is to wither on the vine. It is to fail to serve the needs of the present and the future. Successful innovation means first being rock solid on the central unchangeable values that define who and what we are. Then it means constantly to be on the look out for the most appropriate and effective ways to achieve what we are here to do. Innovations can be small. They do not necessarily need to be gigantic. They are those adjustments, happy coincidences, fresh approaches, sudden insights, considered possibilities, and new ideas, which give new or renewed opportunities to touch people with the love and power of Christ. Innovation and constancy are not irreconcilable alternatives. They are the recipe for fruitful advance over time.

Finally we can adopt challenging aspirations. I want once more to challenge each church in the diocese to have well thought out goals in each of the five areas I have enunciated. If I said we need to be 'purpose driven' some might believe that I had borrowed the idea from a recent visitor. "Not Invented Here" is a label I am never ashamed to wear when an idea is good. However in this case I want to repeat what I believe I have said in each of my Synod addresses: each congregation needs to be intentional, that is, planned, purposeful and determined in its mission and ministry. I want to encourage you, not only to have goals in each of these areas, but to have, as one of those goals, something which will stretch your faith and commitment, something great that will please God and bless people. It is necessary that such intentional church life be founded and forwarded through prayer.

As far as the diocese is concerned I want to propose an aspiration. Taking A.D. 2001 as a target point, what can each of us do, under God, to achieve the following outcomes? One, raise the number of Anglicans worshipping in our churches by at least 15%. Two, equip our new Youth and Education Unit to the point where they will have facilitated a growth in children and youth connected with our churches by that same percentage. Three, assist the Cathedral to fulfil its aspiration to raise \$10,000,000 to establish a revitalised ministry to Sydney for a fresh century. Four, advance the cause of theologically sound, pastorally relevant, and eminently singable contemporary music for public worship. Five, ensure a flow of suitable women and men for ordained and full time service in the diocese. Six, to deliver us from being concerned only with our own issues, seek to assist say CMS to increase its supported missionary force by at least 15 people over that same period.

Once more, thinking more widely than our own diocese, I ask, "What can we do to enrich the life of our National Church?" The General Synod might answer, "Pay your Special Assessment!" But that aside, I ask, what can we do? Before we answer, I believe we must first of all ask ourselves a more fundamental question. Do we really love and care for the church and its mission in the rest of Australia? There are those who consider that the only way forward is to withdraw from it. That is an option, immensely painful and damaging, but an option nonetheless. However if we say that we do love God's people in the Anglican Church in Australia and want to assist them in their life and mission, then we must first pray for them, earnestly and persistently. After that, if we are genuinely humble and willing to acknowledge our own weaknesses, and are honestly committed to helping and not subverting others, it might just be that we could offer some of our skills and resources to assist in the planting of new churches and the revitalising of older ones in other places.

With God the future is always exciting. Even if it leads through the valley of the shadow of death, He is there. Let us rejoice in Him, and with our best strength, seek to live and serve by His Spirit, Coram Deo, "In the presence of God".

In the Diocese

Before we commence the business of Synod I take this opportunity to comment upon the impending retirement of Mr Warren Gotley - Warren has held the most senior lay-executive position as Diocesan Secretary for the past 24 years. He has seen Archbishops come and go and has facilitated the work of numerous Synods and so many Standing Committee meetings with skill, insight, meticulous attention to detail, efficiency and, can I

suggest - patience. It will be hard to imagine this scene without him. He has my deep personal gratitude and the heartfelt appreciation of so many within our Diocese and the Australian Church at large.

I warmly welcome Mr Mark Payne who will step into Warren's roles currently as General Manager, Secretarial and then Diocesan Secretary and Lay Secretary of Synod from November 1. Warren will continue to provide consultancy on a part time basis during 1998.

My warm appreciation to clergy who have served faithfully and well in the ministry of the gospel here in Sydney and beyond and who have retired since we last met: the Rev Stan Colefax from Rector of Bellevue Hill, the Rt Rev Peter Dawson, from missionary service with CMS as a bishop in what was then known as Zaire, the Rev John Drayton from Rector of Newport, the Rev Trevor Griffiths from Coogee, the Rev Silas Horton from Director of Parish Support and Development Division with Anglican Home Mission Society, the Rev Graham Knight from Rector of Mittagong, the Rev Barry Marsh from Narellan, the Rev Elwyn Sheppard from Rooty Hill, the Rev Fred Stanley from Acting Curate-in-Charge of Revesby and the Rev Jim Thomson from Chaplaincy at Parramatta and Silverwater Prison with the Anglican Home Mission Society.

I record with sadness the death of one of the diocese's most faithful and widely loved sons, Bishop R C (Clive) Kerle who began and ended his ministry here in Sydney and served as Diocesan in Armidale for 11 years of his episcopate. We thank God for his life and witness. Archdeacon Robert Gordon Fillingham MBE died the day after Bishop Kerle - he too will be remembered for his long and faithful ministry. I also record the death of Rev Gordon Gerber, Rev W J (John) Haynes and Rev Albert Thomas Pitt-Owen, dedicated ministers of the Diocese.

As I close I want to ask your assistance in my role as bishop of the diocese and President of the Synod. It just so happens that, as the business of the Synod has developed this year, some of the ordinances to be considered have a special concern for me as the Diocesan. I draw this to your attention now by way of a general statement. When the particular bills come up for consideration I will indicate my concerns in more detail and look to you for your understanding and goodwill.

Finally, when you receive your printed copies of this address you will find that they carry an Addendum. It is an extract from an article written by Dr. James Packer on the nature of Anglicanism. I have included it for your thoughtful consideration in a time when we could be tempted to take our strengths and advantages too lightly.

God be with you. I commend us all to the mercy of God for the progress of this Synod.

Endnotes

1. Psalm 33:1. NIV
2. Psalm 103:1-2. NIV
3. Southern Cross, Dec'96-Jan'97, p.2
4. Southern Cross, Dec'96-Jan'97, p.11
5. 2 Corinthians 10:12-18