

Third Ordinary Session of the 44th Synod of the Diocese of Sydney: October and December 1998

Presidential Address

By the Most Reverend R.H. Goodhew, Archbishop of Sydney Monday 12 October 1998.

Welcome to this third and final session of 44th Synod of the Diocese of Sydney. It has signs of being a very busy session. You will have observed the unusually large number of **Motions by Request of Synod or Standing Committee**. For this reason, though there are a number of issues that I wish to canvass with you, I have decided to deal with them over the course of a couple of Synod sessions.

The 1998 Lambeth Conference

First, to say something about the 1998 Lambeth Conference. Four of my Episcopal colleagues and I come to this Synod with the experience of Lambeth still fresh in our minds. I have already spoken on a few occasions about the Conference and its significance. However I thought it appropriate to share with you, the members of Synod, something of the business that was undertaken, of my assessment of its results, and what it might mean for our future.

It was for each of us who attended a memorable time. We gained a great deal, not least of all, a better understanding of the Anglican Communion and a personal knowledge of many of the bishops who play a significant role in shaping its life now and will do so on into the future.

I wish to thank Bishop King who was prepared to remain behind and forfeit the opportunity of sharing in Lambeth. We missed having him with us, but I thank him most sincerely for remaining as Commissary while the rest of us were away.

I wish to indicate to you my appreciation of my colleagues and the contribution they made to the life of the Conference. I was extremely proud of all of them. Each played an active and valued role in its various dimensions. Publicly they commended themselves by their actions and by their spoken contributions. Informally, they offered great encouragement to conservative bishops from parts of the Communion where such people feel under threat. Robert Tong, our Anglican Consultative Council representative, participated in the life of the Conference. He was a great encouragement to us. I must also pay tribute to the work of Margaret Rodgers in the Lambeth Communications Office. As an 'Episcopal Communicator' I was able to observe her work and the circumstances in which she operated. She did a fine job and was greatly respected for her skills. That the Australian media chose to say little about the Conference was not due to any lack of material made available. It was also a pleasure to meet people who remembered my immediate predecessors with affection.

Two other Australians played very significant roles in Lambeth '98. The Primate shared with the Archbishop of Canterbury in the leadership of the group that designed the whole program. I think they did a great job. The Bishop of Newcastle, Roger Herft, was Chaplain and responsible for all that was associated with the worship and spiritual nurture offered during the conference. He too needs to be congratulated.

The Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey and his wife Eileen were warm and generous hosts. They both played active roles in the life of the Conference and openly espoused the place and role of Scripture in the life of the church. We should thank God for them.

The daily Conference program was both full and varied. It began with a celebration of the Lord's Supper at 7.15 am, and often concluded with evening meetings both scheduled and unscheduled that ran quite late. Each day we prayed and studied 2 Corinthians together for 90 minutes in small groups of about 8-10 people. There were moments in the program that were both dramatic and profoundly moving. The three weeks were not all filled with hard work. There were some delightful and relaxing occasions, like a day in London at both Lambeth and Buckingham Palaces, an outstanding stage presentation by the Spouses, cricket (at which Pakistanis and Australians did well!) and golf. One free weekend allowed conferees to relax in whatever way they wished.

The Conference dealt with four themes: Called to Full Humanity, Called to Live and Proclaim the Good News, Called to be a Faithful Church in a Plural World, and Called to be One. "Called to Full Humanity" was divided into 6 themes: Human Rights and Human Dignity, The Environment, Human Sexuality, Modern Technology,

Euthanasia, International Debt and Economic Justice. The Reports and Resolutions produced by the Conference will soon be available. They are worthy of careful reading and reflection.

Human Sexuality

There is no doubt that the issue that most excited the press, and over which there was the most contention, was that of homosexuality; in particular the blessing of same sex unions and the ordination of practising homosexuals. The work in the subsection was intense and demanding. Paul Barnett played a significant role in that debate. He had strong support from Peter Chiswell, Tony Nicholls, and bishops from England, Latin America, Africa and the USA. When Resolution 1.10 on Human Sexuality was finally passed in the plenary session it had been amended into a more theologically conservative statement than the seriously divided working group had been able to produce. It rejected homosexual practice as “incompatible with Scripture” while calling “on all people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation”. It condemned “irrational fear of homosexuals”. Some had hoped that Lambeth would either say nothing on this subject or might offer some encouragement. Lambeth is not a legislative body for the Communion, but it resolved that it “cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions”. The real surprise for all was the strength of the final vote: 526 in favour, 70 against, and 45 abstaining. It left theological liberals in dismay.

International Debt

The debt burdens of many of the poorer nations of the world was a major topic. Australia’s relative isolation makes it easy I think for people like us, to pay scant attention to the intense suffering and deprivation that is the daily burden of many of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the Communion. For some, their circumstances are nothing short of appalling. I could only sit in silence and listen to accounts of war, murder, rape, pillage, hunger, abduction of children, persecution, dislocation, lack of educational and health services, and the absence of facilities which I would consider basic to operating as a bishop. The crushing burden of unpayable national debts, often incurred by corrupt and self-seeking officials, was powerfully represented in the lives of flesh and blood people who sat in front of me. I don’t think I will ever be the same.

Christian-Islamic relations

Linked with the suffering brought about by economic hardship is the plight of believers who suffer at the hands of Islam. Just as we react to the denunciation of all Christians because of the behavior of some, so, I have no doubt, is it inappropriate to demonise all Muslims because of the action of some Muslim governments. However, the plight of Christians in many situations represented by places like the Sudan, Pakistan, and Nigeria calls not only for our prayers but for actions to influence our own government and the governments of other nations of the world, to call for the protection of religious minorities everywhere. The blasphemy laws of Pakistan, inserted in that country’s Penal Code in 1986, have become an instrument of persecution and intimidation. The situation in the Sudan is awful beyond words. It is also clear that the circumstances of Palestinian Christians and their relationships with Israel are also a cause for special concern. I hope we will not be negligent in doing what we can to help fellow Christians in these difficult situations.

Our response

Lambeth 1998 helps to focus for us something of the wider environment in which we operate as a diocese. It also highlights a range of options by way of responses that we might make to aspects of this wider environment.

1. Building Links

First, we will do well to recognise that as geography physically isolates us from a large section of the human family and its concerns, so our cultural history has made us a small expression of the life of the ‘North’ in a part of the globe which owns itself to be ‘South’. We must act decisively to overcome an isolationist mindset in a shrinking global village. We must take immediate steps to build firm links with the churches that are our more immediate neighbours. I purpose to take whatever opportunities are presented to me, and the diocese, to move in this way.

Do give thanks to God for the work of CMS both from UK and Australia, and for the work of SAMS. There is now in evidence a group of African, Asian and Latin bishops who honour the Bible as the Word of God and who wish to allow it to guide the life of the Church. Many of these bishops and their people are having their loyalty to Christ tested in the severest of circumstances. Australian missionaries, a number of whom came from this diocese, have planted seeds in these countries which are now flourishing as strong gospel plants. We must never foreshorten our vision and limit our concerns to our own immediate environment. It is for this

reason that I have maintained a missionary 'hour' in the program of our Synod. It may not be the most effective way to promote a vision for the wider world but it does remind us that such a world exists, a world that is an inescapable focus of concern for the church in this diocese.

2. *Seeking justice for the suffering Church*

A second option open is an opportunity to show loving kindness in God's Name by seeking justice for many who suffer in some of the appalling circumstances I have described. Sisters and brothers, I appeal to your charity. I earnestly entreat you to request that Standing Committee give careful consideration to some method by which resources may be directed towards assisting the dioceses in some of the most needy parts of the Communion. Perhaps we could place a levy on the income that flows into our Appropriations Account each year. 1% might be a figure to consider. I raise this for two reasons. First, we have much while others have so little. The Lord has spoken about equality between believing communities; the abundance of one providing for the want of the other. The second is that we can set an example to government. Australia must be more generous. Government, whatever its political persuasion, must be pressed to raise the level of resources committed to humanitarian concerns. But beyond this we Australians must, through our Government, challenge the world to address the issues that give rise to the apparently increasing disparity between the very rich and the very poor. We aim at pointing people to heaven, to have them embrace the Saviour for themselves. That is our first task and inescapable responsibility, but it cannot, and must not, blind our eyes to the appalling suffering of so many human beings, numbers of whom are our brothers and sisters in Christ. We provide a safety net for people in Australia who find themselves in real need. Can this not be done internationally in some way? When it comes to macroeconomics and international politics I am completely out of my depth. You may feel the same yourself. But that gives no reason to refrain from constantly pressing those who are competent and appropriately placed to translate concern into realistic action. I exhort you, "Do something about it."

3. *Support Jubilee 2000 Campaign*

In presenting the challenges of third world debt to the Lambeth Conference attention was drawn to 'JUBILEE 2000'. This is a coalition of organisations aiming to achieve the cancellation of the international debts particularly for those countries listed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative. Though the world is passing through a period of financial instability I encourage this Synod to request the Standing Committee to explore how we, as a diocese, may play some worthwhile part in this program. I also ask you as individuals to encourage your churches to be informed about those areas where sisters and brothers suffer, and to do what you can to help relieve their burdens. To catch something of what is involved in the question of Third World Debt consider the content of this short clip from a video produced for the Lambeth Conference.

4. *Participate in the Anglican Communion*

For my part, I have returned home with a renewed enthusiasm for the work of the kingdom and a fresh commitment to the life and witness of the Anglican Communion. Some of you will have had the experience of visiting another situation where God is at work and been refreshed in your own spirit. Lambeth did that for me. I have come back with fresh energy for the work that we do here together seeking to be devoted to fulfilling both the great Commandments and the great Commission. I also have a renewed commitment to the life and well being of the Communion of which we are a part. I believe there is evidence of the Spirit's activity reflected in spiritual vitality and a growing commitment to biblically shaped religion. Richard Holloway, the Primus of Scotland, speaking to the press at the conclusion of Lambeth, commented disparagingly on the appearance of this renewed assertion of the Bible's authority. Interestingly, responses of this nature came mainly from the theologically liberal churches of the 'North', despite their numerical decline. This work of God is something in which we must play an active part. It will require something of us. We will, as I have already commented, need to abandon an isolationist mindset and resolve to be an active participant in the life of the Communion. We will need to be humble. God has raised up, and is raising up, leaders in those places to which we once sent missionaries. They are godly, intelligent, well educated, and many, as I have already said, have been tested in the fires of adversity. Africa, Asia, and Latin America will all play an increasing role in determining the future character of the Communion. The face of the Communion is no longer Caucasian and white. We will need to show ourselves part of this growing 'South' community. The skeleton for a Network of bishops committed to mission and evangelism has been developed and will be fleshed out in the near future. This diocese must play a part. We have resources to share. We have much to learn. For the sake of what we may contribute, we will need to be prepared to hold hands with a range of conservatives. Some dress differently in church. Others get more excited about the Spirit of God than is our custom. And there are yet others who vary in their opinions about the role of women in ministry. What we have in common is a loyalty to the Bible and to the fundamentals of supernatural religion as expressed in our Creeds. I repeat: I plan to give more time to fostering these relationships in the future.

5. *Lay and Diaconal Administration*

This intention is one reason for me recently indicating to the Standing Committee that I would not at this time agree to license deacons and lay people as ministers of the Sacraments. You may well wonder why I adopt this position in the light of the varieties of Anglican Church life to which I have just drawn attention. The reason is simple. I am not anxious to isolate our diocese prematurely from the Communion over an issue that is not a practical necessity for us and which, with reference to our Reformation forefathers, our Prayer Book and our Formularies, must be said to be doubtful as a matter of Order. I don't consider we need to carry that extra bit of lead in our saddlebags when we try to be an influence beyond our own borders. I am proud of this diocese, proud of what it stands for and what it does, and proud to have the honour of representing it. There are certainly hills on which one must be prepared to die. In my judgement, at the present time, this is not one of them.

The mid-point letter

It might help you understand my position if you are aware that midway through the Lambeth Conference I joined with the Archbishops of Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, The Congo, Uganda, the Southern Cone, South East Asia, and the Sudan in circulating a letter to all the participants. The letter called for a renewed submission to the sovereign authority of Scripture, for a reaffirmation of our historic teaching and discipline in relation to marriage and celibacy, and for attempts to be made to find appropriate ways to strengthen our instruments of unity and to encourage Provinces to be more accountable to each other particularly in matters of faith and practice. The focus of concern were areas of the Communion where it was thought a major divergence from our historic faith and discipline was being contemplated if not sanctioned. Therefore for me at this time to take unilateral action on a matter over which there would be vigorous debate would do little for my credibility. This, of course, does not preclude this Synod, or any of our representatives at General Synod, from promoting in that place, a Bill for a Canon to permit persons other than priests to administer the Sacraments. That would be the appropriate route to take given the nature of the issue and the recent opinion of the Appellate Tribunal.

In concluding these comments on Lambeth I wish to express my own gratitude and that of all who attended from the diocese to those who upheld us before God in their prayers. Thank you very much.

Parish Ministry

I have been reviewing recently some of the ongoing analysis of the 1996 National Church Life Survey being undertaken by Keith Castle from Anglicare as it relates to our diocese. My purpose at this point is not to comment on all the details but to take this opportunity to urge all Bishops, Archdeacons, Area Deans and Regional Councils to give careful thought to the statistics for their regions. Please do not overlook the tools that NCLS and Anglicare are making available to you for your work. The regionalising of the diocese had as one of its purposes the possibility of more localised strategic planning. Parishes properly concern themselves with their immediate environment. The apparatus of Bishop, Archdeacon, Area Dean and Regional Council is well suited to consider the overall impact of ministry in a Region and to plan for growth and development. I encourage all of you to facilitate a growing partnership between parishes and Regional structures in discovering and supporting fresh ways to promote ministry to our whole diocese. Prayer and planning, the exchange of ideas and effective activities, collaborative thinking and acting can enhance our total impact and foster a greater sense of interdependence. Each Region needs to be looking well beyond 2000 as well as concentrating on the immediate future. If, in future, parish boundaries are to be considered to be as porous as the Report before this Synod suggests, then it will be within such collaborative and regional oversight that any new work undertaken across parish boundaries will have its best chance for harmonious success. There are certainly enough unconverted people to warrant the creation of 'mission centres' designed to reach people with no church connection. Schools, sports ministries, and special activities for particular groups with special needs, are examples of areas in which a Region can give help in setting challenges, identifying resources and stimulating fresh thinking. Under God, the future of each Region lies with the Anglicans who are part of it and with the lay and clerical leadership who function within it. The whole should strive to be more than the sum of the parts.

There clearly are areas in which, God willing, we need to work for substantial improvement. It may involve fresh methodologies and really new ideas. Amongst young people, among people who are not tertiary educated, with men generally across the whole diocese, and with people from other cultures: these are segments in our society that need particular attention. Anglican Youth and Education, the Department of Evangelism and Anglicare are organisations from which I expect help and guidance to come. We need to be sure that these agencies have the resources to give the assistance that is needed. God is pleased to use dedicated effort to advance gospel outreach. I therefore again urge those who have oversight for ministry in the Regions to think and plan strategically.

Context and Leadership

Our times are ambiguous and challenging. Highly significant factors influencing ministry outcomes are *Context* and *Leadership*. There are areas of the diocese, which are less immediately responsive than others are. It might be a temptation, and a possibility, for more gifted clergy to avoid working in such situations. I hope some of the most gifted will take their God-given abilities into such places and demonstrate how we can grow there. Without underestimating the challenge that some areas represent, it will indeed be a sad commentary on our spiritual character if able leaders shun such situations. Those who seek to shape the thinking of people training for ministry have a particular responsibility here. Equally, those responsible for the allocation of resources must help to make effective work in difficult areas possible. Indeed the resources of the diocese must continue to focus on helping local church leadership both clerical and lay to do the best work possible in their particular context. As a diocese we grew at an overall rate of 4.2% in the period covered by the most recent Survey. That is something for we can thank God: both for the result and for the dedication and effort that produced it.

Last year I urged Churches, Regions, and Bishops to pray, plan, and work to grow by 5% each year up until the end of 2000 AD. That is a major lift from the 91-96 figure but I do not think it is unrealistic. It represents an annual increase of 5 new people for every 100 currently attending. Only God can give real growth and from one perspective the nomination of a growth figure like 5% per annum has little meaning. It is arbitrary and takes little account of a range of factors. But from another perspective, it has great importance. Used wisely it stimulates important questions: are we doing the best things, should we be looking for different approaches, do old ways need to be revitalised, what are our blind spots, do we need to ask for some help with our thinking and planning? Those who resource our local churches must continue to help them look at themselves and the possibilities that surround them. I urge congregational leaders not only to be open to receive advice and encouragement but actively to seek it.

It was a wise move made by the Synod some years ago, to provide the Archbishop each year with sufficient funds to enable him to appoint curates, for a period, to situations where they will receive valuable training regardless of a parish's capacity to pay. This has been of great value both for curates and for parishes. It gives the Archbishop a chance to blend training experience with opportunity and need. The funds initially provided made it possible to make four appointments. Increasing costs have reduced this capacity to approximately three. I hope that at some time soon this capacity will be increased at least to its original strength. It is a useful tool in the development of ministers and churches.

The Ephesus Plan

Last year I set before you six specific growth goals for the year 2001. I have already referred to one. They were:

1. Raise the number of Anglicans worshipping in our churches by at least 15%.
2. 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.
3. Assist the Cathedral to fulfil its aspiration to raise \$10,000,000 to establish a revitalised ministry to Sydney for a fresh century.
4. Advance the cause of theologically sound, pastorally relevant, and eminently singable contemporary music for public worship.
5. Ensure a flow of suitable women and men for ordained and full-time service in the diocese.
6. Assist CMS to increase its supported missionary force by at least 15 people over that same period.

Some of those goals called for congregational planning. All of them called for individual planning. To assist in the attainment of those goals I commissioned Bishop Piper, through Vision 2001, to produce the Ephesus Plan. The Ephesus Plan is a booklet of interactive Bible Studies with an Introductory Video. It is a full year's program for individuals, small groups and churches. It focuses on the founding, growth, decline and renewal of the Church at Ephesus and on two of its members, a minister of the Word, Timothy and a typical layperson who lives in the realities of this harsh world. The material seeks to be substantially biblical because it is our aim to please God. It also endeavours to be highly practical in application because we need to be good stewards. It is one method of planning for a healthy Christian community and effective 'whole of life' ministry. The Ephesus Plan material is attractively produced and is now available for use. I commend it to you as a useful tool to help you forward God's work in you area of service.

Securing a Future for Full Time Women Workers

The future for full time women workers is a ministry issue to which we regularly return and which cannot be overlooked. Whatever decisions the diocese makes over time with respect to the ordination of women to the priesthood, it will be important that women are able to find stable employment as church workers. The Synod Conference held in May was in my opinion of real value in spite of the fact that I think we sought to do too much in one day. The balance of the program proved helpful but there was insufficient time for any fresh consensus to develop. If that is to occur I think more time will be needed to explore possible options together. However, while I earnestly wish that we continue such a dialogue, I'm not sure if the members of Synod are of a mind to do so or not. I am reasonably sure that without some process like that we will find it difficult to discover any new way through the impasse that was apparent when we last met and which prompted the idea of a conference.

On our Business Paper are items that seek to permit lay persons and deacons to administer the Lord's Supper. This, it is argued, would improve the employment prospects of women deacons. That might well be true. It is an outcome that I would love to see secured. However it might also work against their best interests by allowing lay persons to be authorised to do all that a deacon could do. I have already given one reason why at this time I am not willing to move down that path. A second is that I do not believe it does anything towards providing a solution for the issue we discussed in May.

Four possibilities

The possibilities before us appear to be four. We can continue as we are. We can license deacons and lay persons, including women, to administer the sacraments. We can make women priests with a condition that they not lead a parish. We can ordain women as priests and allow them to minister in those churches that wish to have a woman priest.

The first possibility, that is remaining as we are, satisfies the plain reading of 1 Timothy 2 and accords with the long tradition of our Church. This position expresses the mind and convictions of a majority in this house but frustrates a significant minority who believe they have a biblical warrant for their aspirations. The present position is certainly a source of critical comment in the wider community and amongst many of our church members. It is said by some that numbers of women are taking their Christian commitment elsewhere because of this.

Without the requisite authority **the second possibility**, that is to have deacons and lay people administer the Supper, would represent a unilateral action that defied the order we have observed from the time of the Reformation. It would in my opinion greatly reduce our influence in the Communion. I have indicated my unwillingness to proceed down that path at this time.

Proponents of **the third possibility**, that is having women as priest but not in charge of parishes, have argued that it does justice to the 'headship' principle while securing further recognition for the place of women in parish ministry teams. This proposal has been rejected by the Synod on a previous occasion.

It has been argued that **the fourth possibility**, that of allowing each parish to make its own decision with respect to a female incumbent, is an exercise in liberty on a disputed point.

Beyond offering an extended period of more intimate dialogue than the processes of Synod allow I do not know how else I can help the Synod find a way around the prospect of an annual debate on the matter. Some responses from the May Conference asked that I make my own position clearly known. There was at least the suggestion that this might help decide the matter. I am certainly happy to make my own stance known. But before I do that there is an associated matter to which I wish to refer.

I am informed that there is an increasing expression of disapproval at our practice of licensing lay women and female deacons to preach. Further, I am told that there are situations where not only are women not permitted to speak when the congregation gathers for regular public worship, but neither are they permitted to read the Scriptures or pray. I repeat what I have said previously namely that an incumbent has authority to order public worship as he chooses provided it adheres to the provisions of his licence. However I wish to maintain strongly the appropriateness of women, both lay and deacons, being licensed to preach in our churches. I also would not want the Synod to silence the women who, in this mixed synodical assembly, teach from the Bible and exhort so ably and effectively. There is clear indication in Scripture of women prophesying in a congregation. I concur with David Peterson when he argues that if "wisdom, insight and power in evangelistic and pastoral preaching" are to be "allowed to come under the general title of 'prophetism' (prophecy and related phenomena)",¹ then there is good reason to allow women to speak, as God has equipped and inspired them, with the conversion and edification of their hearers as the goal.

Now to turn to my own position on the vexed question of women as priests. Clearly I do not support the exclusion of women from speaking in our assemblies. I am persuaded that there is a notion of “headship” taught in Scripture particularly as it relates to marriage. The appropriate expression of that in our society is something that I find problematic. In my own marriage it has meant mutual respect, love and interdependence between two very different people. I believe I have seen the notion abused by insecurity and self-assertion. In this area I am essentially a conservative. I respect the interpretation of Scripture adopted in the church Catholic for nearly 2000 years. It is still the position in the majority of churches around the world. In our Communion we are in a process of “reception”. The movement to make women priests may advance or it may recede. Though I do not share what James Packer sees as the Anglo-Catholic elements in the views of C.S.Lewis I am sensitive to the point he makes when he says,

... unless “equal” means “interchangeable”, equality makes nothing for the priesthood of women.
... One of the ends for which sex was created was to symbolise to us the hidden things of God. One of the functions of human marriage is to express the nature of the union between Christ and the Church. We have no authority to take the living and semitive figures which God has painted on the canvas of our nature and shift them about as if they were mere geometrical figures²

In spite of that I find myself challenged to be open to consider a different approach. The God-blessed ministries of women who, in the absence of men, have founded and sustained churches cannot be ignored. The concern of women deacons about long term employment prospects worries me. I feel the weight of the arguments advanced by those who hold that in a significantly changed social environment, faithfulness to God might mean that the same revealed truth needs to be expressed in a different way. You may be aware of the two questions John Stott asks himself in his *Issues Facing Christians Today*.³ He writes,

Is it possible whether, although the requirement for “submission” is of permanent and universal validity, because grounded in Creation, the requirement of “silence”, like that of head-covering in 1 Corinthians 11, was a first-century cultural application of it? Is it further possible, then, that the demand for female silence was not an absolute prohibition of women teaching men, but rather a prohibition of every kind of teaching by women which attempts to reverse sexual roles and even domineer over men?

He responds to his own questions saying,

My tentative answer to my own two questions is in the affirmative.

Of the same general tenor is the argument advanced by Stephen Sykes exploring a dictum of Hooker. He writes,

The mere fact that a law is given in Scripture is not itself a decisive consideration. Sometimes positive law is given with an indication as to how long it is to remain in force. But if not, we can only judge the question of whether change is permissible or not by considering ‘the end for which it was made and by the aptness of things therein prescribed unto the same end’⁴

Plainly said: some directions cease to achieve the end for which they were first given. This will always be a matter of prayerful judgement. Apparently Leon Morris came to believe that the limitations placed on the ministry of women had reached that point.

So where do I stand? In fact I don’t. I pray. While I appreciate the clarity which allows others to speak for one position or the other with unqualified conviction I cannot. I have prayed for a growing consensus that might indicate the mind of God. I have prayed for greater clarity in my own views. In the practicalities of ministry my contacts with women who are priests or bishops cause me to think of them as I think of men in similar situations: some are good, some not so good. While some see these roles as expressions of position and power I see them as patterns for ordering necessary service that is to be exercised with the gifts God gives and in humility of spirit. What would trouble me most if we were to change our present arrangements is the significance of gender in God’s scheme of things as reflected in the quote from Lewis. However I am persuaded that convictions about the role of women in ministry are not to be placed in the category of beliefs ‘necessary for salvation’. In our Australian Church it is possible for women to be made priests. Should the Synod of this diocese ever decide to act in that way, it could. If you ask me whether I would withhold my consent if such a decision were made, my reply, like Stott’s, would be tentative but I would not withhold consent. But that is not our present situation. Currently we need strongly to affirm women in every way we can in biblically supported service to Christ and the world.

Thank God for Our Structures

Now something about our structures. I hope you can share my gratitude for the structures and resources that have been handed to us from the past. Equally I hope you might share with me the desire to pass on a legacy of similar or greater worth to those who will come after us. Our structures have helped to maintain a focus on fundamental truths, biblically shaped worship, resources for gospel ministry, recognised and influential roles for both laity and clergy, designated areas of ministry which span the diocese, and support and assistance for those involved in that work. I do on occasions hear derogatory comments made about “the denomination”, “the diocese”, and “the structures”. None of these is above criticism or improvement. Change of a positive kind is to be welcomed. On the other hand studied negativism is corrosive and destructive. It will cut the ground from under our feet and deter good people from committing themselves to God for service within our ranks.

Earlier this year I read Lyle E. Schaller’s 1996 book, *Tattered Trust: Is There Hope For Your Denomination?* I commended it to my colleagues for study. I identify with him when he declares himself to be “an unrepentant denominationalist”. Both his criticisms and commendations need to be heeded. His evaluation of the North American context helps one understand why Australian data indicates a high burn out rate amongst those in new and unsupported ministries.

With these things in mind I ask you to be wise and prudent when you make decisions in this session about parish boundaries and church planting by processes different to our current patterns. We must address the ‘now’ issues, but we must do so conscious that, should the Lord tarry, there is a lengthy future to be borne in mind. We have structures that can be flexible and supportive. They can support and encourage new initiatives if the goodwill of every participant is present to make it work for the advantage of all.

Questions of Liturgy

Currently the services authorised for use in the diocese are BCP, AAPB, and in parishes where application has been made and approved APBA with certain limitations. In an age that craves spontaneity and individual expression, the benefits of set liturgies may all too easily be overlooked. It may seem unfashionable and remote to use words written by some one else or, indeed, to read aloud together with others. However, set forms of liturgy have always been part of the Anglican tradition and we have an obligation to use them. Well thought out and regularly used, they fulfil a valuable educative role, help to preserve right belief, and build maturity by teaching Christians how to relate to God.

The Liturgical Panel, which I appointed in 1996, was given two tasks. First it was to advise the Archbishop about requests by parishes to use various Orders of Service not included in the authorised Prayer Books. Then it was to consider producing Orders of Service and other liturgical resources for parishes keen to use forms of worship other than those found in the existing books.

You will appreciate the constitutional difficulties involved. However to maintain the use of liturgical services there is need for some provision that makes controlled experiment and development possible. Initially, the Panel was reluctant to produce a new book, believing that sufficient resources already existed. However, because the Panel is convinced of the value of commonality and of the catechetical function of liturgy it is therefore working on an authorised “diocesan use” within which there is variety. This “use” is designed to contain several “Services of the Word” and “Communion Services”, including one which retains the theology and structure of the *Book of Common Prayer* but in simple, modern English, as well as two kinds of baptismal service. There may also be a resource in the style of “A Modern Liturgy” from which ministers can construct an Order of Service appropriate to the occasion.

The Panel hopes to offer this to me for consideration in the near future. If approved it would be produced in an inexpensive and flexible format to enable ministers easily and thoughtfully to create liturgies which will best serve individual parishes and circumstances.

In the Diocese

Before we commence the business of Synod, I wish to record with appreciation, the work and ministry of those who have retired since last we met. I am well aware, as you are, that a list of those who are retiring from active ministry and those who have departed the Diocese for work in other parts, together with clergy who have died, representing only a few lines in this report, in reality and in the mind and purposes of God, represent lives of faithful service which have touched numbers known only to God with the message of his love, grace and forgiveness. I list them with thankfulness to God for all that their service and varied ministries have meant, and their influence that will continue in other lives. The retirees were: the Rev Peter R Dillon from Rector of Norfolk Island, the Rev J Max C Bonner from Curate-in-Charge of Croydon Park, the Rev Keith T Percival from

Rector of Homebush West with West Strathfield, the Rev John E Lance from Rector of Brighton-Rockdale, the Rev Frank F Copland from Curate-in-Charge of Villawood, the Rev Neil E Prott from Rector of Kurrajong, the Rev Ross F McDonald from Chaplain at Abbotsleigh School, the Rev Reg S Barker from Curate-in-Charge of Kingswood, the Rev Clive L Brown from Rector of Roseville East and the Rev Paul Gurrier-Jones from Curate-in-Charge of Culburra Beach.

In addition, three of our clergyman have left Sydney for overseas work: the Rev Stuart P Robinson from Curate-in-Charge of Quakers Hill to Chaplain, St Paul's Tervuren, Belgium (with the Intercontinental Church Society) and Priest-In-Charge Liege (Diocese of Europe), the Rev Stephen L Gabbott from Rector of Maroubra to Vicar of Christ Church Bangkok (with the Church Missionary Society) and the Rev Russell H Avery from Rector of Lane Cove to Chaplain, Nord, Pas de Calais, France (Diocese of Europe).

I record with sadness the death of a previous Archbishop of Sydney, the Rt Rev Hugh Rowlands Gough, Archbishop from 1958 to 1966, and Primate from 1959. Bishop Gough died peacefully in the United Kingdom on 13th November last year. He is survived by his wife, Madeline. Canon Lance Shilton died in March after a long and varied ministry which included positions in Melbourne, Adelaide, the United Kingdom and as Dean of Sydney from 1973 to 1989. He is survived by his wife, Mary. In addition we lost the Rev Clive N Steele, the Rev Ronald A O'Brien, Deaconess E N (Nora) Hyland and the Rev Robert T Cooper who was Regional Director of the Anglican Board of Mission died in December.

May we together with all who have died in the faith of Christ, be brought to a joyful resurrection, and the fulfilment of God's eternal kingdom.

Now I conclude. I thank you all for your participation over the last three years. Our Agenda is large and some of the issues are complicated and problematic. As we undertake our business let us recall that we are God's people. Let us seek his honour, his kingdom and his will. Let us do our business in a manner that will please him. Let our prayer be that in all things his Spirit will be our teacher and guide. Amen.

R.H.Goodhew

Endnotes

- 1 Peterson, David. Prophecy and Preaching: Acts and the church today (ORTHOS 16, Fellowship of Word and Spirit, Derbyshire. 1997). P. 13.
- 2 Lewis, C.S. "Priestesses in the Church" in *Undeceptions*. Geoffrey Bles. London. 1971. P.194f.
- 3 Marshall Pickering, London. 1984 and 1990. P.277.
- 4 Hooker, Richard (Book 3, X, 1) quoted in S. Sykes *Unashamed Anglicanism* D.L.T. London 1995. P.89.