



Archbishop's Presidential Address  
Synod in the Greenfields  
The Most Reverend Kanishka Raffel  
10 September 2022

Welcome to the Second Session of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Sydney and my first as your Archbishop. It is an immense privilege for me to serve you in this way. I am deeply grateful for the many kindnesses that have been shown to me and Cailey since assuming this role. We are extremely grateful for the many people who pray for us regularly, and for many of you who have let us know. I thank the Assistant Bishops and their wives for their welcome, encouragement, fellowship and support that they have so generously offered us.

As I come to this first Presidential Address, I wish to pay tribute to my predecessor Bishop Glenn Davies and his wife, Di for their unstinting service of the gospel in the life of the Diocese not only as Archbishop but of course, over a much longer period of time including as Bishop of North Sydney, Rector of St Luke's Miranda and Lecturer at Moore College. I give thanks for Glenn's ministry to the Diocese in these and other ways, and I thank Glenn and Di for their encouragement and help as Cailey and I have assumed these roles.

May I also record on your behalf our thanks to Bishop Peter Hayward for his generous service as Administrator of the Diocese including relocating for a period to Sydney, along with his wife, Julie. I am grateful to the Primate, Archbishop Geoffrey Smith for presiding at my inauguration service.

It was the greatest of honours for me to be presented for consecration by Bishop Peter Jensen and Bishop Harry Goodhew who so graciously consented to do so. I, along with us all, remain indebted to the Lord for the fruitful ministry and godly example of these two faithful and vigorously evangelical servants of the Lord.

Throughout the pandemic, we have been conscious of and thankful for those who have served us – the supermarket workers, the cleaners, the nurses and medical staff, and the transport workers. We have been so thankful to teachers, who have taught classes online for their classes, while their own children were online in another part of their homes. This dynamic was at play too for our senior ministers and ministry teams. I want to especially acknowledge the senior ministers of the diocese who have been faithful, courageous and creative, generous, sacrificial and devoted in their efforts to care for their congregations, to

serve their local community, lead ministry teams - whether of paid or volunteer leaders - as well, of course, as caring for their own families. I thank them all.

I'm grateful to each and every person who has served in our churches, schools and organisations, those who served in Chaplaincy in hospitals, prisons and aged care over this period and especially those who were responsible for providing leadership that gave attention to God and his word, that led people to pray and to trust and to serve. The achievement of our local churches and other ministries during this period may never be recorded in the history books, but it is written in eternity.

I am deeply thankful for the way the ministry of word and prayer, proclamation and service had been sustained through this time. Thank you.

### **The Challenge Before Us.**

Hear the word of the Lord, Matthew Chapter 9 beginning at verse 35

*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

*Matt 9:35-38*

Do you see the crowds?

I have invited you to Oran Park in South Western Sydney so that you can stand in this part of our Diocese and see the new communities that are coming into existence as we meet. I hope you took the opportunity earlier today to have a Greenfields tour and to drive around this area. I hope you drove along the perimeter of the Nancy Bird Walton Airport site – which takes about half an hour! – and I hope you looked out the windows across the rolling green paddocks and empty fields at the places which will become suburbs inhabited by tens of thousands of new residents.

The population of Greater Sydney is projected to grow by 800000 people in the next twenty years, and another 2.4 million in the twenty years after that. Grace Anglican Camden Valley is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this year. Later this month Menai Anglican will celebrate its fortieth birthday – in another forty years, there will be nearly 3.5 million more people in Sydney. The current population of the Local Government Area that takes in Leppington and Cobbity is around thirty-eight thousand people. In 10 years it is projected to be home to seventy thousand and in 15 years – by which time I will no longer be your

Archbishop - the population will be more than ninety thousand. Those numbers are almost identical for Marsden Park in the northwest corridor. The Bradfield Local Government Area where the new airport will be located will have a population of three hundred thousand in 2036 – 14 years – and as of today, the closest churches are 20kms away at Hoxton Park, or Leppington, or Oran Park or Glenmore Park. That would be like having one church between Parramatta and Chatswood, or Miranda and Marrickville, or Hurstville and Cabramatta.

Members of Synod, can you see the crowds? Can you see the crowds around you here in Oran Park? Can you see the crowds who are building homes and planning to move to this area in the next five and ten years and twenty years? Can you see in your mind's eye, the ranks of houses upon houses that are going to be built in the places where today we have seen rolling green paddocks? And in those homes, people with hungry hearts. Can you see the crowds?

When Jesus travelled through Galilee, Matthew tells us, he went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and disease. And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

We are told two things about Jesus' engagement with the crowds. He ministered with authority. And he ministered with compassion. He possessed unique and unassailable authority to teach, to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, and to miraculously meet the needs of the people for healing. His presence was the presence of the one whose reign was announced in the gospel he proclaimed. His presence was the presence of the King of the kingdom. The miracles bore witness to the truth of his message – a message supremely, concerning himself.

The Messiah who will save his people from their sins; the worthy one who baptises with Spirit and fire; who heals the sick, raises the dead and forgives sin.

Jesus is the man of consummate authority. The only man in history to exercise authority with unalloyed integrity. That alone is good news.

But in addition to being the man of authority with integrity; Jesus is the man of compassion. He cares, deeply. He is stirred inwardly and viscerally at the sight of the people. He cares for the helpless and the hopeless. He cares for the weary and worn. He cares for the sick – sin-sick, sick in body, sick in mind. He cares for shepherdless sheep.

Do you see the crowds? We are Sydney Anglicans. From the arrival of Richard Johnson with the First Fleet, we have said that we will have concern for the people of this land to hear the

gospel of the kingdom. Through the 1980s, 90s and 'noughties' as Sydney has expanded, previous generations have embraced the opportunity and shouldered the responsibility for ensuring that Anglican ministry would be provided in new growth areas. Will we do it again in our era?

We have taken steps already, of course. It was in 1989 that Oran Park was first identified by Archbishop Donald Robinson as an area requiring a church in the future. It wasn't until twenty years later that we could purchase land and the first sod for the church construction was turned in 2014. The doors of the church opened a year later in 2015 and today our Synod preacher leads a team of 7 full and part-time staff and a congregation of around 300 gathers each Sunday. In addition, as you know, this school stands on land also purchased in the first decade of this century and opened its doors to its first students in 2012. When Naomi Wilkins became head of school 9 years ago, there were 13 staff. Today there are 95, and 800 students. Anglicare also purchased land for the Oran Park Village in 2008. The retirement living village opened stage one in 2013 and Barry Marsh House Aged Care unit in February 2021. The opportunity for churches, schools and Anglicare to partner in ministry in the same district, especially in new growth areas, is more than just coincidental or merely convenient.

Let me explain why. The census results released this year confirm that there are greater numbers of people who don't consider themselves as having a faith or belonging to a particular denomination. 39% of Australians ticked 'no religion' in the 2021 census. In Sydney, that number was a little lower at 31%. But we know that the rise in people who say they have 'no religion' and the decline in people who say they are Christian (44% of Australians, 49% of Sydney residents) doesn't mean that there has been a sudden collapse of faith. Rather, many people who had no engagement with the gospel or any church, have stopped calling themselves Christians. They may still show up at a Christmas Carol service, but they don't claim to belong to a Christian denomination. This doesn't mean they aren't open to learning about Christianity. On the contrary, 30% of people say they would accept an invitation to church – either online or in person – if they were invited by a friend or family member. But here's the rub – more than half of people (56%) say they do not know a family member or friend who is a Christian.

My point is, the opportunity for us to establish an Anglican school and an Anglicare village or social services centre, in tandem with a local church – is more than just a convenient or coincidental circumstance. It is a way of contributing to the growth of new communities while also providing a platform for people to meet Christians employed in those places, and to be helped by our work in this way. Church, school and agency all providing the opportunity for us to serve a local community.

The census tells us that there will be fewer people who will move into a new area and feel that the first thing they want to do is find a church. But if their children attend an Anglican

school, and they meet teachers or other families in that school who attend the local Anglican church, they may be open to coming along if they are invited. If they have an elderly parent who decides to move into independent living in the local Anglicare village so they can be closer to their grandchildren, we may begin to minister to three generations of a family and find them all, in God's kindness joining us at church.

Of course, I am not merely talking about signing people up to Anglican activities. We want them to meet Jesus, to hear his gospel, to repent of their sins and come to him, to know his forgiveness, welcome adoption and indwelling. Things that will not happen unless they engage with Jesus in his gospel and the Spirit convicts and converts them. But I am saying, if we are to do this in new growth areas, we must plan to be present and we must invest in establishing churches and other centres of ministry.

As we meet as the Synod of the diocese there is an urgency for us to respond to the gospel challenge before us. As Bishop Peter Lin pointed out in his address to the last Synod meeting, if we do not get in 'on the ground' before development plans are settled, we will either be locked out for a long time or need to find considerably more money to enter later. During this Synod, you will be asked to agree to three matters. First, to pass an ordinance committing to the Land Acquisition Levy over the next ten years, as we have done over the last ten years, to be used to enable us to acquire land in areas marked for development before development plans are in place.

Second, you are invited by the Standing Committee to engage in a conversation about a diocesan-wide ministry-directed property strategy to serve the mission in the whole Diocese. Third, you are asked to approve a policy of the Standing Committee to hold surplus assets on trust for the mission in the diocese where resources exceed local requirements for current or anticipated ministry needs.

Bishop Lin drew our attention to the fact that by 2056, 50% of the population of Greater Sydney will live west of Parramatta. But as of today, 70% of our property assets are located east of Parramatta. Can we deploy our existing assets in a way that best serve our mission *in the whole diocese*? Can we build into our ministry strategy a deliberate consideration of how local parish assets can serve the mission of Jesus across the diocese?

Not all the growth is in new areas! You know that the Anglican Church Growth Corporation is working with a number of parishes in urban renewal or so-called brownfields areas on pilot projects which aim to see the development of existing property assets in ways that contribute to the local community by providing services of various kinds – childcare, education, disability services - while at the same time allowing the parish to enhance

church and ministry property and generate income some of which will be used to fund new work in greenfield areas. I am not speaking of 'either/or' but 'both/and'.

In seeking to establish local churches in *new areas* we are giving expression to our conviction that it is the local church that is primarily responsible for evangelism and disciple-making. This is because the gospel announcement of Christ as Lord summons people not only into relationship with God through the saving and redeeming work of the cross but also adoption into his family through the sealing of the Holy Spirit. This does not require us to buy land and build church buildings. We could, for example, buy houses and ask God to raise up church planters and evangelists to run house churches in new areas. But we are convinced that in new areas, the development of a church and ministry site has numerous advantages both for the ministry and for the community.

On becoming Archbishop I convened a forum of the leaders of nine organisations with responsibility for property interests in the life of our diocese, including Anglicare, the Schools Corporation and Moore College as well as the Growth Corporation and the Property Trust to consider how to make the best use of the resources with which the Lord has entrusted us for the purposes of his mission. The unanimous opinion of the participants in the forum was that our greatest need was a diocesan-wide, ministry-directed property strategy which seeks to coordinate the interests of parishes, schools and agencies around the mission in the whole diocese. This Synod has the opportunity over the next twelve months to express its mind about how consideration can be given to the use of local assets for local mission as well as for mission in the whole diocese where resources exceed expected requirements locally.

Standing Committee is putting before you a policy to also allow consideration whether surplus assets may held on trust for the establishment of new work in new areas. Are there parishes willing to make a sacrifice of what is familiar and consoling for the sake of future generations in yet-to-be-built suburbs so that they will not be left without an Anglican gospel witness and community? We are not simply liquidating assets, we are reinvesting resources into areas where the needs and opportunities are great and the resources are few.

The people who will benefit from these decisions – are not here! They cannot speak on their own behalf. We must be the people who respond to the opportunity of the greenfields because there are no people there yet, to make these decisions or to invest resources or to plan for the future. That privilege and responsibility belong to us and this Synod enables us to make a start.

Do you see the crowds?

So far I have drawn your attention to the resource challenge. But our ministry is not primarily about land and buildings. The gospel is a summons to people – made in God’s image, redeemable by his Son, eternal beings precious in his sight – and the church is the community of God’s people. The ministry challenge before us is to bring the gospel to the people that God has brought and will bring to Sydney.

### **Multicultural Sydney**

At the end of this month, it will be fifty years since my family migrated to Australia in September 1972. My father and mother, of Sri Lankan birth, but at that time living in Canada, moved to Sydney with me and my two sisters. There was a Sri Lankan community in Sydney at the time, but it was relatively small and dispersed. In 1972 the only place you could buy Sri Lankan spices was a shop in Bondi run by a Sri Lankan man of Jewish background whose name was Moses. When my father died of a heart attack six months after we had arrived, my mother wasn’t able to take out a bank loan for a home because she was single mother. In 1979 a new boy joined my class at high school. He had spent the recent years of his life in India where his parents were missionaries. By the time we were in third year at University, we had a conversation about the gospel and he gave me John’s gospel to read. When I did, God in his great mercy saved me and made me his own.

The census data reveals that after Australia and England, India is our third highest country of birth followed by China and NZ. India has passed China as the country from which most migrants have come to Australia, surpassing the UK which is third in rank and followed by the Philippines and Vietnam - which means four of the top five countries sending migrants to Australia are Asian. In addition, it is projected that the majority of residents in the greenfields areas will be people of Indian, Chinese or Middle Eastern background. Already in Leppington, 30% of residents are of Indian background; in Oran Park it’s twenty per cent.

The Sydney team of bishops is without doubt the most culturally diverse in Australia. Many of our churches have changed their demographic profile in line with the suburbs in which they are located, but the NCLS reveals that while a third of Greater Sydney residents were born in a non-English speaking country, only about half as many Sydney Anglicans were. Welcoming people of culturally diverse backgrounds requires a generous gospel-driven focus to reach out to people in thoughtful, kind and patient ways. In many places, this is happening. People have been willing to welcome newcomers, to forgo the familiar and embrace the gifts and experience of newcomers. Of course, they have often found themselves wonderfully blessed in doing so.

Hospitality, English language classes, refugee support, playgroups and youth ministry, have all allowed local Sydney Anglicans to reach out to newcomers in our suburbs with the

gospel. Anglicare employs a cross-cultural consultant for every region to help parishes think about the people in the neighbourhood and what it might mean to reach out to them with the love of Jesus. Anglicare has produced some brilliant brochures to help people think about how to get to know their neighbours from other places and they have also produced a video resource and study guide so small groups can talk and learn and plan together for this vital local ministry.

As the Lord asks the disciples to pray for workers for the harvest, will you pray for many more subcontinental, Asian and middle eastern background workers to be raised up from our churches? And will you support the cross-cultural evangelists employed by Evangelism and New Churches? There are numerous ethnic congregations in our diocesan life – the Nepalese congregation at Liverpool, Sudanese at Quaker’s Hill, Liberian at Whalan, Assyrian and Arabic congregations at Bossley Park and 40 Chinese congregations and ministries throughout the diocese. What a blessing this is!

I migrated to Australia and was found by Jesus. How I long for this blessing to come to many many more of those who have come ‘across the seas’.

Do you see the crowds?

Indigenous Ministry

As we meet here this afternoon, we began rightly by acknowledging the traditional custodians of these lands and waterways from time immemorial – the Dharawal people. Across our diocese we meet and serve on the traditional lands of the Kuring-Gai in the north, the Eora, Dharawal and Yuin nations on the coast and Illawarra, and the Dharug and Gundungarra nations to the west and southwest. I’m glad to acknowledge the original custodians of these lands, their elders past and present, and to thank them for their wisdom, their stewardship and their hospitality. And I greet any Indigenous people here today. How glad and grateful we are to have you with us.

The opposite of acknowledge is dismiss, deny, disrespect. This is the experience of countless Indigenous people, and they have suffered in this way from us as much as anyone. The impacts of dispossession and prejudice are by no means merely in the past, but in the past, our church was often an instrument of the State. Perhaps there was an intent for good, sometimes we were the best of a bad bunch, some undoubtedly represented Christ and his gospel with courage and integrity, but often there was cruelty and wrongdoing. For more than two centuries the legal fiction of terra nullius meant that officially we did not acknowledge Aboriginal people at all. But for us, as Sydney Anglicans, there is much reason why we should acknowledge the first peoples of this land we now share.

From the perspective of history alone, the Anglican Church in Sydney was among the first to benefit from the dispossession of Sydney's Indigenous people. Some of the first grants of Crown land were made to Richard Johnson, the first Chaplain, and then to the St Philips Glebe and the Bishopthorpe Estate - in the suburb we still call Glebe, and where today, the Dean and the Archbishop live. When the Diocese of Sydney was created in 1847, the church lands within its boundaries became the property of the Diocese. It need hardly be said, that St Andrew's Cathedral has not always been there.

In Feb 1988, at a service at St Andrew's Cathedral to commemorate the bicentenary of the first Christian service in Sydney, attended by all the Anglican bishops of Australia, the then Primate, Sir John Grindrod of Brisbane, said to Bishop Arthur Malcolm, the first Aboriginal bishop whose funeral took place in Yarabah just last month, the following words:

My brother in Christ: ... May I express on behalf of all non-Aboriginal people of our church profound sorrow for the suffering that your people have had to endure, with its violence and hurt. We humbly ask God's forgiveness; and we seek your forgiveness as a leader of your people, for the actions of the past and those causing hurt at the present time. We have longed to share with your people the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We confess our endeavour has often fallen short of his love. We want to walk together with you, sharing and learning together, accepting and respecting each other. Help us to listen to you. Help us to learn from you.

Bishop Arthur Malcolm responded on behalf of Aboriginal people of the Anglican Church:

My brother in Christ: For a long time we have been hurting; our spirits have felt crushed by the wrong actions that took place between my ancestors and yours. Much suffering has been the result, but it is through the message of Jesus Christ that we have learned to forgive. We have received this forgiveness, and now in turn we must also forgive. On behalf of my people, I accept your seeking of our forgiveness and thank you for your apology. Please forgive us too, for our people also engaged in fighting and caused some suffering on your side too... I believe ... God [is able] to take hold of each one's contribution and blend them together to enrich and mature us as a people who belong to this nation of Australia.<sup>i</sup>

It was an important moment in the history of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian Christians but there remains much more to be done.

This Synod will receive the report of the Indigenous Ministry Task Force which was created by Synod in 2018 which offers an apology and acknowledges past failures in our relationship with Indigenous people and our Indigenous Christian brothers and sisters. Last year, the Synod received the report of the Doctrine Commission, A Theological Framework for

Reconciliation with special reference to the indigenous peoples of Australia. I commend that report to you.

It affirms that the bible often connects the saving reconciling work of God with the restored relationships that we should seek with each other (22-24). The love of God in Christ provides the essential shape and basis of reconciliation in human relationships.

The report also addresses both what it calls 'personal enmity' and 'historical estrangement'. While we must be attentive to the causes of sins of racism, prejudice and indifference in our own hearts, it is also appropriate for us to acknowledge that past actions by past people and institutions continue to have present-day impacts.

The survivors of the policies of the forced removal of children, the Stolen Generations are among us, as are their children and grandchildren. This is not ancient history, it is present day experience. And so, it calls for present-day responses. The Doctrine Commission very helpfully addresses the kind of responses that might apply between individuals, at the level of the local church and at the level of the diocese. These are not prescribed, but conversation starters, and I hope you and many others will decide to have this conversation among yourselves in your churches, as we will at the level of the diocese.

As a diocese, we have slowly taken small steps on the road to genuine friendship, mutual understanding and respect and partnership in the gospel with Indigenous brothers and sisters. In 1997 we established the Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee to be chaired by an Aboriginal person, and the Indigenous People's Ministry Trust Fund with a capital grant of \$1.2M to provide income to support Indigenous ministry in the Diocese. In 2002 we agreed to make an annual contribution to the Fund of 1% of the annual Synod budget each year, from 2006. This year's Synod allows us to take another step together, inviting individuals, parishes and organisations to partner in prayer, financially and in other practical ways with Indigenous ministry in the diocese, and developing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters by walking alongside in partnerships of trust, respect and justice.

It was a great joy to ordain Michael Duckett in February this year. He has been the pastor of Macarthur Indigenous Church for fourteen years and now also serves as Chair of the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee. I had the opportunity to spend a few hours with Michael at the Wedderburn property that was purchased to facilitate the ministry of Macarthur Indigenous Church earlier this year. The Task Force report commends to you this model of ministry.

On 2 ha outside Campbelltown, there is a ministry facility with meeting space and kitchen facilities, a large covered area to accommodate various kinds of meetings and activities, including training and hospitality, a billabong with benches for yarning together, and walkways through the bush where the Aunties take the children after Sunday school and teach them language and culture. The property is harder to get to than the church building in Campbelltown - but that hasn't stopped the growth in the ministry, especially through welcoming Indigenous men into a space that they feel is theirs in which Michael is able to open the word, offer hospitality, pray with men about their lives and struggles and see the gospel take root. We'd like to do Wedderburn again, a couple of times! I look forward to hearing from Michael when the report is presented, and I commend it to you.

Do you see the crowds?

### **The Rising Generations**

The projections for growth in these greenfields areas anticipate that over the next three decades the number of children and youth – people under 18 - will stay between 25-30%. There are around 18,000 children and youth in our churches every week and nearly forty thousand students who are taught the gospel by our chaplains and Christian teachers in our schools each week. Only a fraction of the youth and children at our churches are also at our schools, so the vast majority of young people in our schools are from unchurched backgrounds. This explains the need for distinctive patterns of ministry in schools and churches. I praise God for the 1900 Sydney Anglican SRE teachers who teach the stories of Jesus in 1200 government schools across the diocese every week. They are heroes of the faith.

I'm encouraged to hear of schools and churches – senior ministers and heads of school - reaching out to one another, seeking to build mutually strengthening ministry partnerships. Not just in greenfields areas! The challenges and stresses of leadership in our schools and churches are legion – I delight to hear of school heads and local senior ministers (sometimes belonging to the congregation, sometimes not) seeking times to meet together and pray for each other's ministries. My hope and prayer is that it would happen more and more.

The social research coming out of the pandemic is confirming our fears that mental health outcomes for our young people are devastating, and family stability is under huge pressure.

But more than that, we must acknowledge that parents raising their children in the knowledge and instruction of the Lord, and churches and schools seeking to assist them in

that privileged and sacred task are grappling with our vastly changed social context. Once, the vision of the good life as we find it in the bible was essentially endorsed and approved by the wider culture, only perhaps with less intensity.

Today, the cultural milieu is not only distinct from what we might call a biblical worldview, it is also hostile at points to the biblical vision. Chiefly, this centres around authority in the life of the individual. In Scripture, we learn that we are made by God and for God and our highest good is to be found in knowing him and ourselves in light of the gospel of his Son. Dearly loved and precious, inherently and inescapably fallen, redeemed at a price and purchased for Jesus so that we are not our own but live for him who died for us and was raised again. A life lived in expectation of the coming Kingdom, that welcomes and serves that Kingdom in this world and announces its imminent arrival to all around, calling on them too to welcome the King who is coming.

What I am saying is that the discipling of children is both urgent and more necessary and more challenging than it ever has been. And it will take a partnership of families, churches and schools to make it happen. Because children need not only instruction but a community of peers, non-parental role models and mentors (as well as parental models that are consistent and sympathetic) and multiple support structures.

It is already the case that over three-quarters of the people in our churches today made a decision to follow Christ before they turned twenty years of age. Ministry to our young people is vital – and fruitful! I hope you will join me in thanking God for the work of Youthworks College in training youth ministers – the only College worldwide devoted to this task alone - and for Youthworks' Ministry Support and Training Team who are building local church capacity for effective youth and children's ministry. We know that over the first phase of the pandemic every local church that was assisted by YouthWorks experienced growth. This may very well have happened in other churches too – I don't doubt it. We mustn't lose heart or focus at just the moment when the young people of Sydney are desperate for the good news of the God who knows them, loves them and is for them, who will not abandon or banish them, but sent his Son into the world for their sakes who will not send them away for their mistakes, who has prepared a home for them forever, and will not let them go.

Recent research by Sydney University academic Professor Emerita Suzanne Rutland and Professor Zehavit Gross from Bar Ilan University in Israel found that there is 'pervasive' religious bullying against Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu school students in Australia, because of their faith. A 2021 report from McCrindle Research has found that 51% of Gen Z and 47% of Gen Y had experienced discrimination because of their religion. Australia has obligations under the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – the ICCPR - to

protect its citizens from religious discrimination. It is for this reason that it was so disappointing that despite apparent bipartisan support, no Religious Discrimination Bill has been passed by the Commonwealth. Consequently, neither at the level of the Commonwealth nor in NSW is there any law to prevent discrimination against someone on the grounds of their faith.

Article 18 of the ICCPR also enshrines the liberty of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in accordance with their faith. The effective ministry of Anglican Schools depends on our ability to preference in positions of school leadership those who hold to the faith. For this reason, we are committed to seeking religious discrimination legislation to protect people of all faiths from religious discrimination and to protect our right to preach the gospel and teach the faith in our own schools, and to preference the employment of staff who share the same vision of bringing the good news of Jesus to a rising generation.

The Synod will hear that we are in conversation with representatives of our schools as to the best way to achieve these outcomes.

*Jesus looked at the crowds and had compassion on them for they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd*

I need to speak to you about the distressing subject of domestic violence.

The General Synod, meeting in Queensland in May, received the report of the National Family Violence Task Force that was chaired by the Rev Tracey Lauersen from Gippsland, and whose members included Dr Karin Sowada and Dean Sandy Grant. The headline finding of the study reported that Anglicans were as likely or more likely to have experienced Intimate Partner Violence as people in the general population. The study acknowledges the limits of their methodology but the finding did not come as a surprise to any clergy person, 75% of whom nationally, reported that they had assisted parishioners in their congregations experiencing domestic abuse. The Sydney Diocese began to engage with this issue in 2015 when we established the Domestic Violence Task Force.

Since that time significant progress has been made in our understanding of and responding to Domestic Abuse. After listening to survivors and identifying key themes and experiences this Synod adopted possibly the first explicit Australian diocesan Domestic Abuse Policy in 2018. Our work has also resulted in enhanced training including through the Professional Standards Unit, Moore College, Ministry Training & Development, Youthworks and Anglicare to ensure best practice for those currently in training for ministry. In 2017 compulsory training for all clergy and lay ministry workers was conducted through the Faithfulness in

Service conference. We have produced online and in-print resources, which I am gratified to see on display in many of the churches I have visited. The 6-hour online training course, KNOW Domestic Abuse is a vital and important resource available to all clergy and lay leaders. In the coming months, an updated version of this course will be released and I commend it to you, and especially to all clergy.

Anglicare employs a full time Family and Domestic Violence Advisor, Lynda Dunstan, and the Synod maintains a Domestic Violence Monitoring Committee so that we continue to respond to need and develop our capacity in providing support to people experiencing IPV, and training for those in positions of leadership.

We have defended and advocated for the biblical teaching on the nature of marriage. I want to say as clearly as I can in this my first Presidential Address, that there is nothing in Scripture which justifies, excuses or permits any kind of abusive or controlling behaviour by a husband towards his wife, or as does occur in far fewer cases, the other way around. The Family Violence survey found that across church traditions most clergy identified that the misuse of Scripture could be an element in the perpetrator's abusive behaviour and that misunderstanding Scripture often left victims internalising attitudes that meant they remained in unsafe situations out of a mistaken sense of duty to God.

We must recognise that carelessness in teaching on subjects including the nature and purpose of marriage, the 'roles' of husbands and wives, and the place of forgiveness, among others, have contributed to some people's experience of domestic abuse. This Synod will receive a motion on this painful but vitally important subject. I hope you will give it your full attention and endorsement.

We cannot pretend that it is not an issue for us, we must grapple with the fact that some perpetrators are not only members of our churches but sometimes leaders in our churches. This is not acceptable, it does not honour God or uphold God's plan for marriage and we must do everything we can to support and protect women and children who are suffering at the hands of their own husbands and fathers, and to ensure their safety, and we must do everything we can to help perpetrators acknowledge the reality and depth of their wrongdoing, repent and, we pray, be transformed by the Lord.

### **National Church**

The General Synod had the opportunity at its May meeting to affirm the teaching of Christ in relation to marriage, which has always been the doctrine of our church and reflected in our marriage liturgy. Although affirmed by a majority of the Synod voting in the House of Clergy and the House of Laity, the Statement failed to receive a majority of votes in the House of Bishops. It was a moment that resulted in audible grief across the Synod floor, and small

groups of people spontaneously gathering to pray as we all processed this failure by the majority in the House of Bishops. To be clear, the House of Bishops is made up of the 23 Diocesan Bishops plus the Indigenous Bishop. I am the only Sydney bishop to vote in the House of Bishops. Our regional bishops, like all assistant bishops, vote in the house of clergy and not in the House of Bishops. The following day, a petition signed by 123 members of the Synod, more than half of those in attendance, was presented to the Synod. It read in part:

*... the petitioners humbly pray that Synod commits to praying that all Members of the House of Bishops would clearly affirm and be united in their support for the teaching of Christ concerning marriage and the principles of marriage reflected in the Book of Common Prayer.*

Since then several dioceses have announced they will offer blessings of marriages contracted under the Commonwealth law, regardless of the sex of the parties.

That Australian Dioceses are proceeding in this way, inevitably means that the ‘tear in the fabric of the communion’ that was identified by the Primates of the Anglican Communion meeting in 2003, has now manifested itself in Australia. I urge you to continue to pray in the terms of the petition presented to the General Synod. I covet your prayers for the meeting of the national bishops in October. Please pray for our Primate Archbishop Geoffrey Smith who has convened the meeting.

In response to such departures from the doctrine of our church, a congregation in Brisbane decided to leave their diocese, surrendering all their property and assets. This congregation of lifelong Anglicans, still pastored by their rector, have joined the Diocese of the Southern Cross, an extra-provincial diocese that is not part of the Anglican Church of Australia but is in fellowship with the Primates of the Gafcon Council. The bishop of this new diocese is the former Archbishop of Sydney, the Rt Rev Dr Glenn Davies, who has put the pastoral care of ordinary Anglicans above his own comfort and a quiet retirement.

The Diocese of Sydney has not split from the Anglican Church of Australia. There are no plans for us to leave. We will not do so. Nor have we provided any funding to the Diocese of the Southern Cross. As you know, on the contrary, we financially support the National Church by more than half a million dollars a year, almost twice as much as any other Australian diocese. But I am glad to extend the hand of fellowship to Anglicans wherever they may be, who seek to be faithful to the Scriptures and our Anglican formularies, and in doing so find themselves unable to accept the leadership of their local Anglican structure.

The Diocese of the Southern Cross is a pastoral response to the painful reality of division over irreconcilable visions of the shape of the life of obedience. Our commitment is to the prayerful and humble study of the Scriptures in fellowship with others who are willing to do

the same and to gladly yield to the Lord's loving rule over his church by his Spirit-breathed Word.

Undoubtedly, one of the dimensions of the pain which these conversations produce, is that experienced by LGBTIQ people who listen, either from within our church or from outside. We affirm without hesitation that all people without exception, are made in God's image and precious in his sight. We rejoice to affirm that as bearers of the image of God, all people equally are to be treated with respect, dignity, and honour. Inasmuch as carelessness in these conversations injure, offend or distress LGBTIQ people or their loved ones, I am deeply sorry.

People who experience attraction to people of the same sex, or identify as LGBTIQ are members of our families, members of our churches and of this Synod, members of our communities, our colleagues, neighbours, friends and loved ones. What we want is for all people to know the deep, deep love of Jesus. For those who know it already, you know that that love makes all the difference in our lives, and is constantly reshaping and reordering our loves, our priorities, our way of thinking about and being in the world. This includes countless numbers of men and women who experience attraction to the same sex, who model lives of joyful, fruitful, relationally rich and gladly obedient discipleship. We honour you.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus says to his disciples, 'Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field'. In the next chapter, he sends The Twelve in answer to their own prayers, and in Luke 10, he sends the Seventy Two. And today, here we are, 400 or so representing the 50000 of us on any Sunday who spend the whole rest of the week not in church, and in our schools and agencies and ministries and chaplaincies maybe another 10000 or so – and that's just Anglicans! How the Lord has answered the prayers of the first disciples to pray for workers for the harvest.

Do you see the crowds? Crowds of people from all cultures who will come to Sydney, people who will move into the greenfields, crowds of young people hungry for love and meaning and purpose. Will these suburbs be built on aspiration and consumption and nothing more? Can we not offer a gospel of new life, hope, light and love? Must we not do so?

Members of Synod, do you see the crowds?

---

<sup>i</sup> John Harris, *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope* 1990 Albatross Books, p867.