

**DIOCESE OF WAIKATO AND TARANAKI
FIRST SESSION OF THE THIRTY EIGHTH SYNOD**

PRESIDENTS' CHARGE

Kia Whakakororia ki Te Atua i Runga Rawa, Kia Mau Te Rongo ki Runga ki Te Whenua, Kia Pai Te Whakaaro ki Nga Tangata Katoa.

E Te Maungatapu e tu ra, ko Taranaki, Tena Koe: Ki Te Waka Tokomaru, Te Waka Aotea, Te Waka Kurahaupo Tena Koutou. Nga Mihi Nui Ki Te Pihopatanga O Aotearoa Ki Hui Amorangi Ki Te Upoko O Te Ika.

Honore ki Te Arikinui Te Kingi Ko Tuheitia. Ki Te Kahui Ariki Katoa, Ma Te Atua Ratou E Manaaki E Tiaki i Nga Wa Katoa. Ki Te Waka Tainui Tena Koutou. Ki Te Iwi o Ngati Maniapoto, Tena Koutou. Ki Te Pihopatanga O Aotearoa ki Te Hui Amorangi Ki Te Manawa O Te Wheke, Tena Koutou.

We have glorified God with the first language of this country.

We have acknowledged the presence of the sacred mountain of Taranaki. We have acknowledged the Taranaki tribes as well as our partners in mission from the Maori Bishopric of Te Upoko O Te Ika.

We have honoured the Maori King and his household, we have greeted the Tainui tribal confederation, including Ngati Maniapoto, as well as our partners in mission from the Maori Bishopric of Te Manawa O Te Wheke.

Welcome to our special guests here tonight, especially our ecumenical partners.

Thank you to all of you who gather for this synod. We want particularly to acknowledge that many of you are here having been chosen by your communities to be their representatives, and while as members of Synod we gather together we wish to express our particular thanks to the senior leadership team of the Diocese who shoulder specific responsibilities: our Chancellor, our Vicar General, the Deans, Archdeacons and our Ministry Educator.

Thank you to our Diocesan Manager, to the members of Standing Committee, our Trust Boards, Management Resources Sub-committee and Ministry and Mission Resources Sub-committee and the other task groups in the life of the Diocese.

To our colleagues working at Charlotte Brown House and Tikituterangi house, and to colleagues at Trust Management Limited; thank you for your warmth, your humour, your vision and your commitment.

Thank you to the many volunteers who work so tirelessly and faithfully in different ways to support our life together. Your diverse contributions are of immense value and we are so deeply grateful.

And finally to our families, especially to Myles and Belinda, we want to acknowledge the cost, and the unfailing love and support you offer us – thank you.

In Memorium

We remember those who have died since the last time we gathered to transact our business as the Diocesan Synod, some we will record in this Charge; some are written on our hearts. Please stand with us in silent thanksgiving.

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Our Episcopal Vision

In our charge to Synod last year, we presented our three-fold vision for the Diocese: that grounded in prayer, we are equipped for discipleship, and connected to community. This past year has seen a particular focus on prayer and liturgy, and on our Anglican identity, with training events held, and the week-long feast of Anglican prayer and spirituality. This has enabled our whole Diocese to gain strength in our corporate life during a period of ongoing consolidation and change, looking to critical questions about our future sustainability as we engage in God's mission. As we move to our focus for 2016: discipleship, we do so conscious that this prayerful foundation is the basis for our life together as disciples. This intentional link is nowhere better illustrated than in Jesus' teaching of the Lord's Prayer to his disciples, which we heard read to us in its version in Luke's Gospel. This is a prayer that forms the heartbeat of our lives as Christians. The New Testament scholar Bishop Tom Wright describes it as 'a prayer for people who are following Jesus on the kingdom-journey.'

We want to explore briefly, four key areas which form our vision for the outworking of the theme of discipleship over the coming year.

Firstly, the Lord's Prayer says something important about the nature of discipleship. The disciples ask Jesus to *teach* them how to pray, as John *taught* his disciples. You cannot be a disciple if you are not open to being taught something new; indeed that is the very meaning of the word 'disciple': one who is a pupil or an apprentice. The relationship of teacher to pupil represented by Jesus and disciples tells us that disciples are those who learn by being in the company not just of one another, but of the one from whom they are learning: Jesus Christ. This process of teaching and learning did not happen instantly, but rather for Jesus' disciples, as indeed for us, it took time. We know from the Gospels, that those who followed Jesus encountered many challenges and situations that looked to be utterly hopeless; but each challenge was turned into an opportunity, with imagination and a compelling commitment to the unshakeable eternal reality of the One who called the disciples into new life: the God of all grace who never lets us go. We know that frequently the disciples got things wrong, but Jesus never gave up on them. The life of discipleship is all about the company you keep, those from who you are willing to learn, and more often than not, it was and is about keeping the company of those whom we are most unlike, the most vulnerable and forgotten by society as a whole. That is a challenge of the utmost importance, because it calls us to vulnerability in how we learn; it demands of us courage and tenacity; it requires of us great humility and

patient wisdom. Discipleship is not an intermittent activity, it requires intentional and constant seeking on God through making our whole lives the outworking of what we learn through saying the prayer that Jesus commanded us to pray. We seek a Christian presence of discipleship in every aspect of our communities, so that each person may contribute to a Gospel that puts justice and compassion at its core.

Throughout next year, there will be many continuing opportunities to engage in learning and training. We continue to be very intentional in seeking to green our leadership, and in thinking carefully about how we can best grow and resource our lay ministry. We also ask that you be open to seeking out new ways of offering yourselves through service to others in your communities, and growing the many excellent things that are already happening, sharing those ideas with one another in your regions and archdeaconries.

As we continue to grow in discipleship through careful stewardship of our gifts, resources and assets, we ask that every parish, school, and ministry unit follow the 2016 Lent course that is being produced by Theology House in Christchurch. Entitled 'Stewardship: Through Lent with Mark'; this series of 6 studies for small groups has been jointly written by Peter Carrell and the Bishop of Waikato. We hope that by engaging with texts from Mark's Gospel in fresh, practical and thoughtful ways, we will all grow together in what we learn from the insights we can share.

A **second** important message from the Lord's Prayer is that there is an intimate connection between our prayer, our life in discipleship and the call on each one of us to be our sister and brother's keeper, and to care for the world that is our home.

The prayer Jesus taught begins with the hallowing of the name of God, giving praise for the unmerited gift of life in creation, and immediately turns to pray that the kingdom of peace justice and righteousness might be a reality here and now. A community in which human beings flourish, the creation is treated with respect and the resources of the earth are sustained for those who are to follow us.

Here we have the extraordinary scope of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be Done on earth as it is in heaven". From the heights of heaven to the needs of earth and all who inhabit it, in one great step. From the hallowing of God's name and its holiness, to the doing of God's will to the provision of food. Take care of neighbours physical needs, give her water, food, clothes, healing and companionship. "In as much as you have done it unto the least of these my brothers and sisters you have done it unto me". (Matt 25:40)

We are called to be stewards of this great mission.

What a huge spiritual burden it is for us well-fed Christians to have to remember our starving brothers and sisters every time we pray the Lord's Prayer. What an enormous responsibility that rests on us to not only remember our brothers and

sisters in Kiribass, the Tokelau or the Marshall Islands, or the people of the Irrawaddy delta or the great river deltas of Bangalore who are so impacted by the consequences of climate change.

In a world seemingly dominated by hatred and distrust, *the Way* of Christ is a way of living that has one major remedy for the undoubted evil in the world: the remedy of forgiveness. The testimony of the ancient church is abundant on this point; II Corinthians 5:19 '*in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us*'; Ephesians 4:32 '*Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you*'.

What is emphasised is the fact that the Christian has entered into a world not governed by fear or distrust but by love, a world from which the divisions and oppositions of secular society have vanished and there is '*neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free*'. The consequence is a new sense of community which finds expression in mutual service. We have entered into that sense of community when we utter the first phrases of praise in the Lord's Prayer. We enter it when we pray with all our neighbours for our daily bread but we enter the deep inner court of Christian community when we utter the forgiveness petition.

When we have experienced *the Way* of forgiveness and seen the transformative power of love we can do nothing other than respond to human suffering generously and unconditionally.

An area in our contemporary situation where this comes in to sharp focus is the response we as a Christian community and as a wider society are making to the current refugee crisis.

- 4 million people across the borders in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey
- 1.5 million in Germany alone by the end of 2015.
- The number of refugees from Syria has doubled from 2014 to 2015
- You have seen the images and you have heard the numbers.
- Simply the biggest movement of people since the second world war.

As we respond with our resources to assist with the resettlement of the additional intake of 600 refugees we have the opportunity to demonstrate to our government that as a society we have the capacity and the moral obligation to significantly increase our intake. It also demands of us a significant recommitment to interfaith dialogue and understanding. The role of this Diocese in assisting with the resettlement of refugees will be important over the coming months, with Hamilton already a refugee resettlement area.

The **third** important message from the Lord's Prayer is that this is not a prayer simply for the individual. It only achieves its fullest meaning when it is prayed together by the whole body of Christ, or with an awareness that even if we pray it on our own we are joining in a chorus of languages and cultures with Christian sisters and brothers the world over.

Give *us* each our daily bread.
And forgive *us our* sins,
for *we ourselves* forgive everyone indebted to *us*.
And do not bring *us* to the time of trial.

This image that we displayed for the first time at Synod last year is made up of photographs from the life of our whole Diocese. These photographs form an image of Christ, and remind us that all our lives are interwoven with each other because together we respond to God's call of discipleship. We rightly celebrate the many ways in which we currently share with one another through collaborative action.

We will as Bishops be giving special focus to seeking ways of encouraging and growing fresh opportunities for the sharing of ministry and resources in ways that both honour local engagement in mission, and seek new connections with those around us. Our Anglican ecclesiology is very clear in its strengthening of the whole body: locally, across the Diocese, nationally, and as part of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Both Bishops rejoice in many connections and links with other parts of our Communion, and we both speak with great confidence that our Communion is a vital part of who we are as Anglican Christians.

2016 will see the continuation of our rich and long-held partnership with our Tikanga Maori brothers and sisters of Te Manawa o Te Wheke through our joint Ministry School. This partnership is an outstanding and unique example in the life of our whole Church of the outworking and honouring of our Treaty-based relationships.

It is clear to us also from experience in the north, that the work of Anglican Action, fast gaining increasing national recognition in its tireless work for justice through service, illustrates that partnership and collaboration for the sake of the most vulnerable in our midst, models for us possibilities for how we can engage with the corporate nature of the outworking of the Lord's Prayer in our own communities. This anticipates the third aspect of our vision in 2017: that we are connected to community. We recognise that many parishes, schools and ministry units are already connecting to communities in creative, imaginative and life-changing ways; we celebrate this, and want to see and encourage more growth in this area.

The **fourth** important message we want to take from the Lord's Prayer can be simply stated: while Christ's prayer is very here and now focused, the present always stands under the scrutiny that is possible when the light of the Gospel, and the Kingdom it proclaims, is shining on what is happening.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is no political manifesto. The prayer Jesus taught and the Gospel he proclaimed will always challenge the ways things are and any complacency we may be guilty of. We *are* constantly called to work for the new community of peace and justice and righteousness which the Lord's Prayer assumes and which the Gospel sets out.

As Christians we respond to God's call in the context of eternity. We know that we build on those who have gone before us and that there are others who will follow us in the faith.

Our challenge to each mission and ministry unit associated with this Diocese is to more authentically be a Christian presence and witness in your community and through your networks. As we think about being 'presence' and 'witness', as our forebears in mission were, we will have to wrestle with the relevance of our current structures and our current resources, including our buildings, in supporting this mission.

By the time we reach 2020, which will see the tenth anniversary of this Diocese as it was renamed, we want to see visible growth and strengthening in all areas of prayer, discipleship and commitment to community service. This then is our 2020 vision. Our vision and commitment as Bishops is to lead this Diocese towards sustained growth, for the flourishing of all God's people, known and loved by God without question or discrimination.

Grounded in prayer – we are equipped for discipleship – and connected to community.