

**DIOCESE OF WAIKATO AND TARANAKI  
SECOND 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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

**Welcome** to our special guests here tonight, especially our ecumenical partners. In particular we are delighted to welcome back to the Diocese our brother in Christ the Archbishop and Primate of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, the Most Reverend George Takeli. Archbishop it is a deep honour to have you with us tonight. Also welcome to the General Secretary of this Church, and a son of this Diocese, the Reverend Michael Hughes. Michael is an outstanding servant of this Church and it is lovely to have you with us tonight.

**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.

*Brother Brian SSF, Geoff Hyde, Reverend Lesley Hyde, Tilly Campbell, The Venerable Bruce Dale, Reverend John Hoar, Brian Haskell, Reverend Mary Mould, Joan Harrison, Diana Smith.*

Please stand with us in silent thanksgiving.

*Please stand*

May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

### **Episcopal Vision**

2017 will see the third year of our episcopal vision: that grounded in prayer, we are equipped for discipleship and *connected to community*. Throughout the process of the working out of the vision, we have been keen to stress that the three strands are interwoven. They will each have a life beyond this three-year period, and will continue to inform and shape our engagement with God's mission.

As we stand on the cusp of the launch of our vision for community, we wish to acknowledge the positive working relationships which as bishops we have enjoyed with two city mayors, each approaching the end of their terms of office. Mayor Andrew Judd of New Plymouth, and Mayor Julie Hardaker of Hamilton, we are profoundly grateful for the positive working relationships we have enjoyed and for the high level of good will between our roles. We thank you both, and wish to assure you of our prayers for this next season of your lives. As bishops we consider the many connections that we have between church and wider communities to be essential, mutually challenging and life-giving. Opportunities abound for community links to be forged and strengthened throughout the Diocese. We applaud those connections already made, and we encourage each one of us to seek new ways to support and enable our ministry and mission units, chaplaincies and other ministries to serve the many lives they interlink with.

We are hard-wired for relationship, with God and one another. The dynamic union that is represented in the life of the Trinity gives us a model of relationship to follow. Drawn into community we celebrate what we hold in common whilst acknowledging that we are all different too. This is the mystery of creation: each one of us is a unique child of God; each one of us shares the desire to know God more fully. We cannot escape that profound sense of reach and longing. God calls us to

know God more, and we respond through becoming disciples. The first disciples were called to follow Jesus, and to fashion their lives after him. The coming of the Holy Spirit provided energy and inspiration for the increase of the community of faith that would become the early church, the first Christians, followers of The Way. The Anglican Church honours the Apostolic Succession through our three-fold ministry of deacon, priest and bishop. Yet all God's people are called, each has a vocation to be what God is purposing them to be. Ministry is for each and every one of us, lay and ordained. We are each given tasks and responsibilities for the purpose of increasing and strengthening the community of faith.

In the first Charge of this episcopal partnership in 2014 we outlined our three-fold vision.

By beginning our focus on **prayer**, we acknowledged that prayer is essential for our relationship with God. Without regular prayer, we cannot communicate with God; without regular prayer we lose connection with God's will and purpose in our lives. To wait patiently on God in prayer, in silence, in meditation, while out walking, with other people, alone, in worship, in celebration, in despair, all of these are held before the God who hears our cry and sustains us always. When Jesus' disciples asked him how they should pray, Jesus' response as told in Luke's Gospel was the command to pray The Lord's Prayer. This prayer is a mandate for discipleship, both in its being and in its doing. As disciples, we give glory to God; we seek God's Kingdom on earth as in heaven; we ask not solely for our provision but for that of others, sufficient for the day ahead; we forgive the sins of others as we ourselves are forgiven; we seek protection from all that prevails against us, whilst upholding the need for protection of our most weak and vulnerable members of our communities. The journey of discipleship is characterised by a desire to deepen the understanding of our faith, in the company of others. None of us can place God in a box, and all of us must seek continually to grow in humility and openness to God's constant capacity to surprise and shock us out of prejudice and complacency.

This year our focus has been on **discipleship**, and the launch of the new *Living Faith Today* course and Bishops' Certificate next year will form the basis of all lay training in the Diocese, and represents a significant raising of the bar of our expectations and valuing of lay ministry. We have been encouraged by the many signs of focus on discipleship over the course of this year, but equally we feel that there is always more that we can each do to intentionally celebrate and engage with God's mission as disciples of Jesus Christ. We continue to seek for a culture in this Diocese that is joy-filled and hope-filled, and which rejects negativity and ill-feeling towards our neighbours.

Next year, 2017, our focus will be on **connecting to community**. As Christians, followers of Christ, we are committed to vibrant, healthy, attractive servant communities **and** we are also committed to building the 'Kingdom of God, here on earth – as it is in heaven'.

So as we gather here as the church to make decisions for and about the life of the church, but the basis of our decisions cannot be, "Is it what I want?" or "Is it good for the Church?" The criterion for our decisions must be, "Will this enhance or inhibit the spread of the Kingdom, the 'new community' of God?" or to put it another way, "Is what we are doing true to the nature of the Kingdom of God?" In a book of essays

published in the 1950s, called "Soundings", John A.T. Robinson wrote, "*You can have as high a view of ministry as you like as long as your view of the church is higher, you can have as high a view of the Church as you like as long as your view of the Kingdom is higher.*"

A good portion of the Gospel is taken up with Jesus' teaching about the nature of the Kingdom of God. It is an upside down community - Jesus reversed the general value system by pronouncing blessing on the poor, the hungry and those who weep.

As the Church we are called to be this sort of community, a sign, a glimpse of what God is calling the whole creation into being; a community that lives for others. Seeing the needs around us; responding, healing, accepting, forgiving, reconciling. A sign of the God who is in our midst.

Jesus was open to the world around him, in dialogue with it and yet standing in contrast to it - so the church must also be. We need to be clear about the Gospel that we proclaim. This Gospel argues the health of a community is measured not by the relative comfort of the majority but by the experience of its weakest member. It is a Gospel that expresses power through servanthood. It is a Gospel that proclaims a community in which loving is more important than winning, being vulnerable is more important than having power and where helping someone to find the best in themselves is better than managing peoples lives.

The manifesto of this community is seen clearly in the Sermon on the Mount and pre-eminently in the Beatitudes. This is a high vision of community, it is a demanding manifesto, it almost seems impossible - Jesus recognises this - you will notice that each beatitude begins in the present tense and moves to the future tense.

The present tense indicates that the beatitudes *are expressions of what is already true* about the Christian community. Of course, not every member of every part of the Christian community can claim to be meek, merciful and pure in heart, but the beatitudes are addressed, not initially to individuals but to the whole household of faith. Among every authentic Christian community can be found persons of meekness, ministers of mercy and workers for peace. Their presence and activity among us is a sign of God's blessing and a call to conform our common life more and more to these kingdom values. But the move to the future tense challenges and reminds us of how far we have to go.

In the world, the way is power; in the Kingdom of God, the way is love. In the world, the focus is self; in the Kingdom of God, the focus is others. In the world, the rule is law; in the Kingdom of God, the rule is trust. In the world, the practice is get; in the Kingdom of God, it is give.

We are all citizens of both the Kingdom, the new community of God, and this world. This needs to characterize every interaction we have both within our faith communities, across the Diocese and in the way we relate to, and serve the communities in which we are set.

This understanding of community works on a number of levels:

Parish or Ministry Unit, School, Hospitals, Prisons, Agency and Foundation; Bishopric; Diocesan; Provincial, and across the Communion. Each of these foci are enabled by the connection we have with God in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is God's Holy Spirit that inspires us in action, and calls us to minister in God's name. We are greatly encouraged by positive developments in the field of vocations. We are extremely grateful for the innovative and inspiring work being undertaken by our Diocesan Director of Vocations, to foster and encourage vocations among some outstanding young people.

We pay tribute also to the outstanding work done by our school, tertiary and hospital chaplains, and those working in secular employment. We all need to realise that all God's people, lay and ordained live and work 'in community'.

Our vocational deacons minister so often on the edges of society, with those in the greatest need, in our cities and rural environments; our priests embody incarnational and sacramental living wherever they are located.

Lay ministers and many others who volunteer tirelessly do so because they recognise the call of God to be Christ to all whom they meet, whether that is seen or unseen, we know how much goes on that is unheralded, and we wish to offer our profound appreciation and gratitude for all that hard work and commitment shown by so many.

At General Synod Te Hinota Whanui in May, the theme of Climate change was prominent, not least by motions and presentations by our Pacific sisters and brothers. Care for creation must be a priority, for it affects so many other aspects of our daily lives. We cannot afford to see it as someone else's issue, it belongs to each of us too.

A few months ago many of us in Taranaki and from beyond, joined with our Mayor Andrew Judd on a walk for Peace from his office in New Plymouth to the village of Parihaka it was a potent expression of the hope we have in us – believing that we can find a way of dialogue across great difference, pain and suffering and that we can heal the past and forge a positive future. As we walked, men and women, old and young, maori and pakeha, the affluent and the afflicted, we talked and we listened and we were changed by the experience.

There are many, many examples of excellent community engagement initiatives already across our Diocese, and here we want to highlight just a small number in the hope that this may inspire others to realise that it is possible, but that you have got to heed God's call to start small and aim big, and you need to think deeply about the culture you inhabit currently – how welcoming are you?

From **Putaruru** – vicar Jan Tarrant reports: *'Messy Church is not simply an opportunity to engage in craft activities and have a 'free meal', but a time when families can come together to enjoy being together and making things together, eating together and celebrating God together through his word, through music and through prayer. It is different from a children's activity programme because it is an event for children and their carers or parents together, and an element of worship underpins it all. Leader Mary Addison has found it to be an opportunity to invite people into an experience of Christian community that is friendly, hospitable and fun. It provides us*

*with an occasion to engage with our wider community, where people are invited along not only to participate in the 'messy activities' but where their often 'messy life' is not a barrier to them or to us.*

*We begin the afternoon gathering in the church by setting the theme, and then move on to about an hour of craft activities; thematic to the story we are engaging with. We then celebrate in the church, retelling or acting out the story, and enjoy music, singing and/or participation with simple musical instruments.*

*Next, we share a hot meal together. This is a proper 'sit down meal' where the dining space has been prepared creatively, and the children and their carers sit at the table, learning table manners and the pleasure to be gained by sharing a meal with others. This is the Eucharistic part of the session. Relationship building (as in any church service) is an important part of the gathering. It has not only enabled gathering with new people at St Paul's, but with old people in new ways.'*

**Selwyn Centres** have been established in several parishes in the north of the Diocese. Andrew Brock from the Bishop's Action Foundation captures something of this vision for building community among older people in our suburbs, towns and villages.

*video*

From **Huntly**, vicar Peter Sampson reflects on his initiative to hold photographic exhibitions in the community: *"The occasional photography exhibitions in town began out of my desire to meet people and to contribute to the life and well-being of the town. And as the clergy, to model the mission focus I was talking about to the members of the church. I wondered how my growing interest in photography and my desire to connect with people related? I put posters around town to gauge interest in an exhibition and developed an adhoc collective called 'elevate'. A few emerging photographers contacted me to participate. In the spirit of Luke 10, I knocked on doors until I found that 'person of peace' who was sympathetic to my idea and provided exhibition space in the main street. At the opening, I spoke of celebrating creativity, participation and being local. Each time we've had an exhibition we've met and included new people.*

*The simple idea of seeing if others wanted to participate in a photography exhibition has had numerous positive outcomes. Seeing the pride on the faces of those who never imagined they would have their work displayed in public is wonderful. Creating a little buzz around town is fun. And developing relationships with others prepared to take a risk for the sake of bringing a little light into the town has been a joy.*

*A couple of people connected with during the exhibitions started coming to church. Unfortunately, welcoming these newcomers into our existing congregation has been more difficult than I expected.'*

Judy Wood the Coordinator of the **Seasons for Growth** speaks about a programme that has made a difference in the lives of hundreds of children who have been traumatized by grief, loss and abuse.

*video*

Later on during Synod we will listen to and engage with students from St Paul's Collegiate who have started an inspiring ministry with local low-decile schools, called 'Over the Fence.' We look forward to that presentation, and commend these young women and men as role models to us all. Our invitation for 2017 is for each ministry unity, however constituted and expressed to create a new initiative or share an established programme with neighbouring parishes to engage directly with their immediate surrounding community. We would do well to stop and think for a moment, if as churches and other related bodies we weren't here, would we be missed? We want to build a different culture throughout every part of our Diocese to engage in God's mission at a local level.

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.***