



ADDRESS

by

The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall AC

Archbishop of Brisbane

to the

First Session of the 80th Synod

of the

Diocese of Brisbane

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Welcome to this First Session of the 80th Synod of the Diocese of Brisbane.

Since Synod last met – COVID-19 pandemic

It seems, and it is, a long time since Synod last met in a normal session to conduct its usual business. It's over two years since the third session of the 79th Synod met in June 2019. We had a very unusual Synod in 2020 which took only 15 minutes from beginning to end. Its only business was to pass a Canon to enable deferring of the ordinary session until 2021.

This most unusual step became necessary because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed on gatherings to contain the spread of the virus. So a

bare quorum of Synod, which, as you all know, consists of only 10 licensed clergy and 20 lay members, met in St John's Cathedral, socially distanced, with others joining the proceedings via Zoom, to deal with the single item of business: a Canon to defer the ordinary session. One brief speech, no disagreement, no debate, a handful of formal votes and it was done. The rest of the 15 minutes was used for prayer. While some people might think this represents a new ideal for synod there's no doubt that it was highly unusual and a sign of the times.

The pandemic turned life upside for everyone and every organisation including the church. What seemed like daily announcements about newly imposed restrictions or the easing of constraints left many of us reeling and uncertain about what the rules were from day to day. Staying on top of the constant changes required concentration, effort and discipline. I thank the General Manager and the Executive Directors for their careful and timely communications which kept us all informed and up to date about what was required and permitted at any particular time and made clear our responsibilities.

The impacts of the pandemic created huge new demands across the diverse activities of the church.

When our schools were locked down many parents suddenly found themselves home-schooling through no choice of their own. Our teachers had to switch very quickly to delivering classes on-line. I am proud to say they performed outstandingly and achieved amazing results. Nevertheless students experienced significant disruption to their annual

routines and expectations. Some senior students missed out on some much anticipated highlights of their final years at school.

The Ministry Education Commission staff similarly had to adapt quickly to deliver education programmes on-line rather than face to face. Notwithstanding the usual teething problems they did a great job. Thank you.

Our community services were placed under enormous pressure. The elderly have been at high-risk and so residential aged-care facilities as well as care and nursing services delivered at home had to be particularly careful. Emotional and spiritual demands on staff weighed heavily. At times close family members were not permitted to visit loved ones, even as they were dying. That has been enormously difficult to bear for both family members and caring staff who witnessed their distress. In the face of these significant pressures our people performed exceptionally well. Thank you. The whole church is very much indebted to you.

Parish clergy and lay leaders, ably encouraged and supported by the PMC team, also had to adapt and learn to function very differently with little lead-time. The PMC made available small technology grants to assist parishes to obtain cameras, computers and other necessary technology. Parish teams provided pre-recorded and live-streamed worship, devotional and daily prayer opportunities on-line. I was amazed at how readily our leaders acquired the necessary skills and at the range of offerings they made available. It was really quite remarkable. I recognise it came at a cost and that after months of operating in these new ways many felt tired and a bit worn out. This was exacerbated when face to face

worship could resume and some church members wanted the on-line options to continue as well.

The overall effect has been an increased load being borne by our clergy and lay leaders. For their willingness and generosity in bearing that load, I thank them on behalf of us all.

The load has increased significantly, too, not just for clergy, lay worship leaders and technology people. Lay people have stepped up in all sorts of other ways, too. Covid wardens keeping a watchful eye to make sure we meet our obligations. Those who have sanitised church buildings and accoutrements after services in preparation for the next; preparers of morning teas and lunches have also had much extra to do. Rapidly changing rules and regulations about maximum numbers permitted in church buildings, wearing of face masks, musicians and singing, pre-booking seats in church, keeping records of who attended, ensuring people use check-in apps – among other measures - have been and continue to be necessary to protect the health and well-being of church members and the wider community. They add considerably to the burdens borne by many in carrying forward Christ's mission. Thank you one and all for your care, attention to detail, generosity of spirit, patience and perseverance. Thank you to each and every one who has gone the extra mile. Please know that your efforts are greatly appreciated.

A question much on our minds since early 2020 has been when will things get back to normal. I think we all now realise that we will not be going back to normal. Normal in the

future will not be what was normal before the pandemic. A new normal is already emerging. Things have changed for the future and will continue to evolve.

For example, the new technological skills we have acquired have opened our eyes to new and better ways to meet and interact. Online meeting platforms like Zoom and Teams have been a boon; you might even say a godsend. We have learnt that we can meet and collaborate in ways other than face-to-face meetings. BC, before Covid, Diocesan Council used to meet monthly face-to-face at St Martin's House at 5.15pm on Thursday evenings. That's not an ideal time for people who have to travel into the city in peak hour traffic, find somewhere to park and pay for it. That we could effectively and efficiently deal with our responsibilities from our own homes and workplaces was an eye-opener. Of course, some people like virtual meetings more than others and the informal interactions that go on in and around face-to-face meetings are valuable and largely missing from virtual gatherings. So some face to face meetings need to continue. The upshot is that DC has decided to meet face-to-face and include an informal meal every second month and in between to make use of the convenience and cost savings afforded by virtual meetings. Many committees, commissions and organisations are adopting a hybrid approach of this sort. It's the new normal.

In a similar way many faith communities are developing new hybrid approaches to worship, daily prayer, faith formation and pastoral care. Some face-to-face contact is necessary for good relationships and quality interaction. And the digital tools offer us new opportunities

to connect in convenient and effective ways. Creatively getting the mix right is a new opportunity for us.

Sacramental life – Holy Communion

One area in which we have felt deeply the impact of the pandemic has been in our sacramental life. The pandemic has affected the ways we go about Confirmation, Ordination and renewal of ordination vows, anointing the sick and most profoundly our eucharistic habits. In particular, our heritage of communion in both kinds and using the common cup has had to be temporarily adapted. Despite assurances that communion in one kind, that is receiving the bread alone, conveys to the communicant the full benefits of the sacrament, many people feel deeply not receiving the wine. Some have responded to this deep sense of loss with pleas to be able to receive using small individual cups, as do some protestant churches.

Beneath the sense of personal loss are some significant theological issues. Some are concerned that withholding the cup from all but the eucharistic president, and especially withholding it from the assembled laity amounts to an unwelcome return to pre-Reformation, late medieval practice where the priest alone received from the cup. From this perspective denying the cup to the laity breaches a principle of worship in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and flies in the face of the Reformation principle that the whole people of God should receive from the cup. In our own tradition that principle was explicitly affirmed in the formularies of the Elizabethan Settlement in the 16th century which became cornerstones for the Church of England and for other Anglican Churches which trace their

roots to that source. Article 30 of the 39 Articles of Religion leaves no doubt about the principle:

*XXX Of both kinds
The Cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the Lay-people: for both parts of the Lord's Sacrament, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike.*

This principle was later embodied in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The rubric, the instruction, immediately following the Prayer of Consecration in BCP says:

Then shall the Minister first receive the Communion in both kinds himself, and then proceed to deliver the same to the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, in like manner, (if any be present,) and after that to the people also in order, into their hands, all meekly kneeling. ...

I certainly recognise the principle which is at stake here and feel the force of the argument as I empathise with the sense of loss felt by so many in the current context.

What is often not noticed, however, is there is more than one principle at stake in Article 30. The Article refers, in capitalised form, to '*The Cup*' and is rooted in '*Christ's ordinance and commandment*'. These principles, together with that of the whole people of God receiving communion in both kinds, go to the catholic character of Anglican identity.

The opening words of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia are these:

The Anglican Church of Australia, being a part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, holds the Christian Faith as professed by the Church of Christ from primitive times and in particular as set forth in the creeds known as the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed.

The first thing our Constitution says about this Church is that we stand in continuity with the ancient church catholic. We believe what the Church has professed from primitive times as expressed in the creeds.

The second thing we say in the Constitution is:

This Church receives all the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as being the ultimate rule and standard of faith given by inspiration of God and containing all things necessary for salvation.

In a fine economy of words, this embraces the bedrock of the Reformation movements which transformed the Church of England in the 16th century while maintaining its bonds to its catholic heritage.

The third thing our Constitution says is that –

This Church will ever obey the commands of Christ, teach His doctrine, administer His sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, follow and uphold His discipline and preserve the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons in the sacred ministry.

This fleshes out what's necessary to maintain continuity with the primitive church catholic expressed in union with the transforming impacts of the Reformation.

These sections one to three of our Constitution comprise Chapter 1. They are called 'Fundamental Declaration' and the Constitution makes them unalterable. They cannot be changed, no matter what. They set out the irreducible core of the reformed catholic faith and order of Anglicanism.

Our Fundamental Declarations weren't invented out of thin air in 1962. They resonate deeply with what's called the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888, which has become a much respected and convenient statement of what's the irreducible core for Anglicans.

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards home reunion:

- a. **The Holy Scriptures** of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- b. The **Apostles' Creed**, as the baptismal symbol; and the **Nicene Creed**, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- c. The **two sacraments ordained by Christ himself** - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.
- d. The **historic episcopate**, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.

(Resolution 11 of the Lambeth Conference, 1888)

A meeting of the House of Bishops in the United States in 1886 set out to declare what Anglicans would insist upon if they were to unite with other churches. Today, instead of 'Home Reunion' we would probably speak about 'full communion'. These are the things Anglicans look for in another church in order to recognize in that church the fullness of catholic faith and order. Finding that fullness permits full recognition and mutual exchange of ministries and sacraments. The American bishops took their statement to the Lambeth Conference in 1888 where it was adapted slightly and embraced by the whole communion. It's been a solid reference point for Anglican identity ever since. Notice the degree to which our Fundamental Declarations echo the phrases in the Lambeth Quadrilateral.

So, to loop back to the issue that launched this excursus: in the current conditions of pandemic can we use individual cups at communion to ensure everyone receives in both

kinds? As I say, I am sympathetic to the felt need for such an adaptation of our heritage and understand the serious theological considerations that underpin it.

I am also aware of the fundamental importance of continuity with the church catholic from primitive times and with this Church's obligations to conduct its sacramental life consistent with that continuity. Because sacramental practice goes to the irreducible core of the primitive catholic faith expressed in our formularies we should be very hesitant to alter it. Further, because it goes to that irreducible core, and affects all, we should, as far as within our power lies, alter our sacramental practice in concert with the whole church catholic. While that is virtually unachievable today, as a bare minimum I think that before we introduce any such change we should strive for a common mind at least within the Anglican Church of Australia.

Many more issues impinge on this consideration than I have time to canvas fully here. I hope I have said enough to explain why I don't think individual bishops and dioceses, still less individual parishes, should be taking this matter into their own hands and acting unilaterally. That is why I have suggested to the Primate that he appoint a group of eminently qualified people to consider the range of issues involved – liturgical, theological, ecclesiological, pastoral and legal, in conjunction with the best advice available from epidemiologists and public health experts – to advise the church about the way forward in relation to the eucharistic common cup. Such advice could address the best way to deal with the current circumstances of pandemic; the conditions under which use of the common cup might be reintroduced, and any longer term considerations that warrant attention. The

Primate has agreed to take this step and I understand is in the process of establishing such an advisory group.

In the interim, I think the best course is to restrict receiving from the common cup to the eucharistic president alone and others present communicate in one kind only. I know that is a departure from our sacramental principles but I believe it is an anomaly necessitated by current public health demands. It is also one which, in my view, makes more likely a return to our heritage of sacramental practice when conditions permit.

I note that the House of Bishops of the Church of England took this same approach in relation to the use of individual cups. Based on advice, the English bishops informed the Church in 2020 ‘that the distribution of wine at Communion in individual cups is illegal’ and that the proper approach in the current emergency was to administer communion in one kind. Though that view was challenged on legal grounds it was the approach taken in the Church of England. At the beginning of this month the English bishops issued an extensive document providing guidance to churches on the Roadmap out of Lockdown. In a lengthy document, the guidance ranged broadly over many issues concerning church gatherings and practices including Holy Communion. The bishops advised that -

The common cup may now be shared, but the Bishops wish to make clear that, given continued potential risks to health, it remains permissible for the president to be the only person who receives Holy Communion in the form of wine. Whilst variations in forms of service are at the discretion of the minister who is to conduct the service, it is recommended that a consistent policy is worked out in a parish and carefully communicated.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-09///COVID%2019%20Guidance%20from%20the%2019th%20July%202021%20v2.0.pdf>

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I look forward to the time, hopefully in the not too distant future, when vaccination rates in Australia will permit us to move in a similar fashion.

Visioning document

The current COVID circumstances, with disruption to 'normal', and hybrid patterns of worship, ministry and organisation emerging, contain an implicit invitation. It's to do with adopting a spiritual stance which affirms that God hasn't abandoned us, that God is still at work in the world creating, redeeming, healing, reconciling and beckoning us to become co-creators, partners with God, collaborating in this project of new creation.

Many of you will be able to cast your minds back before Covid to the most recent ordinary session of synod in June 2019. It actually wasn't all that ordinary, as it happened. 2019 was the year we made use of open space technology in synod for the first time.

The open space process invited us to identify topics we were passionate about, to meet with others who shared that passion and to seek ways forward together. No topic or issue was out of bounds. And we were encouraged to claim our own God-given gifts to take action. Open space is intended to empower every participant to claim their own agency. We were reminded it wasn't about generating motions for Synod, or lists of things for Diocesan Council to do. It was about each participant taking responsibility, together with others, to make a difference for God's mission.

That context set for the Synod in June 2019, is still, in broad terms, where we are. Yes some aspects of our circumstances have changed, and changed quite dramatically. But that

spiritual context of God continuing to create in our world and urging us to be partners in that new creation project, haven't changed. We have some new tools and new insights and new skills to deploy, because of the pandemic, and some new challenges to face and overcome. But the basic mission remains. And the invitation to claim our own agency to make a difference, to take God's mission forward where we are in collaboration with those who share our passion, that hasn't changed.

There is no blueprint that will be delivered from heaven, still less from Diocesan Council, telling you and your organisation or congregation or school exactly what you are to do. God has given you the gifts of faith and prayer and discernment and reflection and intelligence because God wants you to be an active partner in taking God's mission forward. You, prayerfully relying on the Holy Spirit, growing into the likeness of Christ, having formed within you the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, in collaboration with those whom God has called with you, you are to work out what's next in the place where you are. God is relying on you to do that.

To assist and stimulate your own planning and direction-setting in your faith community or school or organization, over the last 18 months or so the Diocesan Council has developed and now adopted a brief, single page, vision statement.



OUR VISION

Flourishing faith communities: proclaiming
and serving, worshipping and learning.

At the beginning of 2020, Diocesan Council and the five Commissions and Executive Directors devoted a day to discerning a vision for the next few years. The material generated on that day was sifted by the Diocesan Leadership Team and presented to DC, and further refined into the single page document included in your synod papers.

It is general, as you would expect. DC simply can't, even if it wanted to, tell you precisely what to do on the ground in your patch. That's why God has called you where you are. But the DC vision document can offer some clues about what we all might work on together in the years ahead, each context working out how to do that in its own unique place.

I hope you are beginning to unpack and explore the vision document and to share it with your people.

The overall vision is 'Flourishing faith communities'. We've used the term 'faith communities' very deliberately. It includes parishes and congregations and goes beyond them to include all sorts of other faith communities as well, of very diverse sorts.

If the image of the tree is a metaphor for the Anglican Church in Southern Queensland, then the various branches and the large canopy of leaves represent the huge diversity and richness of everything the Anglican Church does in Southern Queensland: in its parishes and congregations, in its schools and associated communities and networks, in Anglicare with its wide variety of workplaces and community services and activities, in our chaplaincies and pastoral care services in major institutions, in our ministries of theological education and formation and discernment, in our work with children, youth, families and young adults. Wherever the Anglican Church is present and active in Southern Queensland that's a branch or a leaf or leaves on the tree in which we all belong.

The vision is about all of those hundreds, possibly thousands, of diverse 'faith communities' **flourishing**.

What do we mean by flourishing? A faith community is flourishing if it is proclaiming Christ, serving the community in which it is set, and deepening its participation in Christ through worshipping and learning. Flourishing is to do with proclaiming and serving, worshipping and learning.

Proclaiming and serving are about a faith community, of whatever sort, facing outwards to make a difference to those in the wider community.

Worshipping and learning are about entering more and more deeply into life in Christ so that we can be ever more faithful, ever more Christ-like, as we go about being Christ's presence in God's world.

If a faith community is proclaiming and serving, worshipping and learning like this, then it's flourishing, even if it consists of only a handful of people.

Underpinning this vision and guiding our actions to make it a reality are 5 fundamental guiding values.

Our Values

Faithful
Imaginative and Creative
Courageous
Authentic
Comprehensive

We want to be: faithful, imaginative and creative, courageous, authentic and comprehensive. Those are great values, great reference points to guide us as we launch ourselves into the next steps in God's mission.

Along with the five fundamental values we've identified 5 key focus areas to concentrate on in the period ahead and to undertake specific projects to achieve identified outcomes. Those five key focus areas are:

OUR KEY FOCUS AREAS



Comprehensive Anglican identity and purpose



Energising, nurturing and mobilising ACSQ's people



Flourishing parishes and faith communities



Engagement with each other and the wider community



Stewardship and sustainability of resources

First, to embrace and treasure our comprehensive Anglican identity and purpose. There are different approaches to Anglicanism. In Southern Queensland we want to embrace,

celebrate and be confident in an Anglican approach and culture that can be called comprehensive. I'll say a little more about that in a minute.

Our second key focus area is to energise, nurture and mobilise our people – clergy and lay, paid and volunteer, young and old. We want all of our people contributing all that they can to God's mission and growing as they do.

Third we want to see flourishing parishes and faith communities of all sorts.

Fourth we want to deepen our engagement with each other, in the spirit of comprehensiveness, and we want to grow our engagement with the wider community.

Fifth and finally, we want to ensure sustainability into the future which requires wise stewardship of resources God has entrusted into our care.

Here on a single page is a broad framework that I hope you will take up in your own context and make your contribution to moving ahead with God's mission in Southern Queensland.



OUR VISION

Flourishing faith communities: proclaiming and serving, worshipping and learning.

OUR VALUES

-  **Faithful** – steadfast in love for God and each other and steadfast in purpose to undertake God's mission
-  **Imaginative and creative** – being intentional about reforming culture and traditions for God's world
-  **Courageous** – to risk new things and where necessary, to make bold decisions
-  **Authentic** – being genuine and confident in living and speaking about what we believe as followers of Christ
-  **Comprehensive** – being welcoming and respectful of a broad range of ideas, people and approaches, and open to dialogue and learning

OUR KEY FOCUS AREAS

-  Comprehensive Anglican identity and purpose
-  Energising, nurturing and mobilising ACSQ's people
-  Flourishing parishes and faith communities
-  Engagement with each other and the wider community
-  Stewardship and sustainability of resources

"I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

"They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither." Psalm 1:3

What will you do where you are to enable your faith community to flourish through proclaiming and serving, worshipping and learning?

In your setting what can you do to be more faithful, to be imaginative and creative, to have courage, to be authentically Christ-like, and to embrace comprehensiveness?

What can your faith community tackle in our five key focus areas?

I look forward to hearing about and being part of all sorts of initiatives to make this vision a reality.

Comprehensive

Let me say a little bit about what we mean by comprehensive Anglicanism, because that's probably the least understood term in our vision document.

In a nutshell, three main stands are woven together to comprise Anglican identity.

Three strands

Catholic faith and order
(creeds, sacraments, bishops)

Reformed, evangelical, protestant
(authority of the scriptures)

Reason – freedom of intellectual enquiry
(history, science, discovery)

I spoke earlier about continuity with the catholic faith and order of the Church since primitive times being fundamental. This involves treasuring the ancient faith expressed in the creeds, the sacraments of baptism and eucharist and ecclesiastical and episcopal authority expressed through the threefold ministerial order of bishops, priests and deacons. Anglicans see themselves as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ from primitive times.

Secondly, in the course of the 16th century the Church of England was transformed as it embraced elements of the reform movements that swept through Europe. Abuses and distortions that had developed in late medieval Catholicism were corrected. Those abuses saw corruption of ecclesiastical authority which perverted the penitential and sacramental practices of the era. Procuring forgiveness by purchasing indulgences, paying priests to say repeated masses for the dead to shorten their time in purgatory and so on were rejected and corrected.

Martin Luther rediscovered the truth that salvation was not procured by human actions, or earned and merited by good works, but was a free gift of God, that is grace, received by faith. Luther rediscovered this truth in Paul's epistle to the Romans. And so in this second strand, which is variously referred to as reformed, evangelical or protestant, the primary source of authority is the scriptures. The 39 Articles emerge from this strand, with their insistence that doctrine, faith, had to be tested against the scriptures. The historic creeds of the church should be believed because they may be proved by the scriptures. The General Councils of the Church were not infallible. They could be in error. What Councils said had to be tested against the scriptures. The Book of Common Prayer of 1662 eventually emerged through this reformation process and, as you know, it is packed full of scriptural resonances, quotations and paraphrases. Through this second strand the scriptures become the ultimate rule and standard of faith, as our Constitution says, and contain all things necessary for salvation.

The third strand woven together in Anglicanism is often referred to as 'reason'. Behind this emphasis is the influence of the renaissance and the flowering of thought and discovery of all sorts which followed the reformation movements in continental Europe. The emergence of critical reasoning, historical awareness and scientific methods all had their impacts in the life of the church too.

By reason we mean more than simply the human capacity to think logically and critically. Reason certainly includes that but encompasses much more besides. Reason is to do with discerning and discovering the truth wherever and however it is discovered. The basic

conviction is that all truth, no matter how it's developed or discovered, ultimately comes from God. And God has blessed human beings with minds to explore and inquire and to discern God's presence and activity and truth in all that is. So reason requires an openness to all fields of human intellectual enquiry including the sciences, the arts, literature, music, poetry and philosophy and even other religious faiths and traditions. They all can grasp and express something of God's truth. This openness to reason and experience tends to give a 'common-sense' flavour to Anglican theology and an inclusive character to Anglican spiritual life.

So Anglicans endeavour to hold together these three component strands. The trouble is they are sometimes in tension with each other. They appear sometimes to contradict each other. For example, in Galileo's day parts of the scriptures were usually understood as contradicting some of Galileo's scientific observations of the solar system. In the 20th century what reason and experience indicated about the leadership of women in many aspects of human life seemed to contradict the catholic inheritance of the church, that only males could be priests and certain texts in the scriptures were commonly understood to mean women could not exercise authority over men. It was only after 40 or 50 years of wrestling and struggle that parts of the church came to accept the ordination of women as deacons, priests and bishops. Some parts still do not accept that development.

That is to say that at the heart of Anglicanism there is a constant tension between these three perspectives – the catholic, the evangelical and reason - where each challenges and corrects the others. So right at the heart of Anglicanism there is a process of dialogue, of

dialectic, which requires a great deal of effort and energy to sustain. Understanding the value of these constantly moving, dynamic tensions among the three perspectives is the beginning of understanding Anglican 'comprehensiveness'.

Comprehensive

Each strand contains truth

Constantly moving dynamic tensions
(dialogue, dialectic, living with ambiguity)

Can harden into tribalism that excludes other emphases

Dispositions of the heart
(humility, we are gifts to each other)

We begin by affirming that each of these perspectives, these sources, has truth to tell. That means all three need to be engaged in the process of dialogue if we are to comprehend the whole truth. If any one is missing then we are missing something of the truth.

Difficulties arise for Anglicans, though, when people drawn to one or other of these three perspectives as a personal preference, habit or conviction, form groups with the like-minded which harden into exclusive, competing parties. When extremists in any camp become absolute about their own convictions and preferences and seek to convert everyone else to their own point of view or to exclude from the fellowship those who differ, then the whole dynamic system is threatened.

Comprehensiveness requires continuing engagement of the different views and living with the tensions: *'the very nature of ... dialogue [means] there must be vigor, imagination, persistence, determination, respect for differences and a spirit of reconciliation. ... What is required is not an exhausted and hostile state of noncommunication, but the enduring of the tension in the confidence that truth will emerge from the dialogue'* (Wolf, 1979b, 152-53).

Writing in Church Times just a few weeks ago, Angela Tilby insightfully observed that –

All this requires a high degree of tolerance, which exists uneasily alongside ongoing mutual suspicion. There is a certain C of E [Anglican] tribalism, the search for “people like me” in training institutions, dioceses, synods. Negotiating the complexity requires sensitive antennae, and is often rather exhausting. ... Being a[n] Anglican is a vocation, and living with complexity is a large part of what it means. (What draws Anglicans to Rome? Church Times, 10 September, 2021)

Comprehensive Anglicanism tries to live with paradox and ambiguity by affirming the truth present in various positions which are in tension with one another. Anglicans attempt to live with apparent contradictions and paradoxes in the belief that God's spirit will lead us more fully into the larger truth in which ultimately they will be resolved.

If this dynamic of ongoing tensions at the heart of Anglicanism is to be constructive and healthy, and not deteriorate into a state of hostile non-communication, it needs to be underpinned by particular spiritual dispositions, dispositions of the heart and spirit. It's

difficult to remain engaged with those with whom you differ. It requires a maturity to maintain respect, openness to the truth of their insights, preparedness to disagree and to stay in relationship.

There must be humility. Participants must remain open to the possibility that others with whom they differ may have grasped something of the truth which they themselves are yet to see. In other words, I may learn something from you of which I am not yet aware. In this way, even though we disagree, I am invited to see you as a gift from God who can be a channel of grace to me, enabling me to grow in truth and godliness. In this way I am to treasure you as a means of grace, rather than merely tolerate you or worse still, seek to convert or exclude you.

As St Paul reminded the church in Corinth (1 Cor 12), no one part of the church can say to another, 'We don't need you.' And as he reminded the church in Rome (Romans 12) we who are many are one body in Christ. Individually we are members of one another. God gives diversity and variety so that the one body can be full, complete, healthy and vital.

Our minds and hearts need to embrace the expectation that each other person here bears gifts from God for building up the body of Christ to serve God's mission in the world. We should look expectantly for those gifts in each other and see each other as gifts to the body. At root these spiritual attitudes, these dispositions of the heart, supporting and sustaining the ongoing dialogue in the face of tensions and difference, are the bedrock of comprehensive Anglicanism.

Such an identity and culture would provide enormous impetus to God's mission to heal and renew the world. Societies around the globe are fractured and polarised in all sorts of ways. 'Cancel-culture' is rife. We are desperate to hear the truth and good news that every person bears the image of God, is of infinite worth and that, even though we differ and disagree, it is possible to relate to each other with respect, generosity, patience, gentleness.

I hope and pray we can embrace and cultivate such an Anglican identity throughout this diocese and be a shining light in the Australian Church and beyond to the world God calls us to serve and heal in Christ's name.

In the shadow of COVID-19

I am very aware, as you are, that the COVID Pandemic has almost completely overshadowed our lives for more than 18 months now. In many ways it has overshadowed huge issues that have arisen in Australia and around the world that properly deserve more attention than I can give them in this address. I am pleased that some of these will be taken up during the business of this Synod. Three concerns are at the forefront of my mind which I commend for your prayers.

First among them is the crisis in Afghanistan. I wrote to clergy in recent weeks asking them to bring to the attention of the whole church the call by Australian churches and individuals for the Australian government to provide for a special intake of 20,000 additional refugees from Afghanistan and to provide appropriate support and security to all Afghan refugees in Australia.

Secondly, the Queensland parliament has now legislated for Voluntary Assisted Dying. As recently as the 1990s parliamentary enquiries in Australia and in the UK recommended against going down this road and moving a moral, social and legal cornerstone of our society. If media reports can be believed, however, there has been a huge shift in public sentiment on this issue over recent decades. Apparently a majority is now in favour of this change. Former Archbishop Peter Carnley observed a few years ago, in response to similar moves in Western Australia, that the parliamentary report was based on emotive reactions and was 'Light on Logic', the title of his published response. I fear for the impact this will have on medical professionals and carers, on the elderly and other vulnerable people in society. Will governments properly fund palliative care and make it broadly available when there is a cheaper option?

Thirdly, research commissioned by the Anglican Church of Australia and conducted over the last few years revealed a higher rate of Intimate Partner Violence among Anglicans than in the general community. Given how widespread the scourge of domestic and family violence is in the community at large, this is a truly troubling finding that demands a significant response.

In the face of these, and many other issues, may the Lord of life take and use all that we are and all that we have, in these days and beyond, to bring light and life, justice, peace and hope to the world.

