

Sermon for Synod Eucharist

Christ Church Cathedral, Grafton, 21 June 2019

The Rt. Rev'd Dr Murray Harvey

re-orientation, in adopting God's new mission for his life and living out God's call for him. Rather than pursuing his own mission, he re-oriented himself to God's mission.

What is our call, our vocation, in this strange new landscape that we find ourselves? How can we make sense of it? Like Paul, we have to accept that God is somehow in this strange new landscape, this experience that we find so disorientating. What is he calling us to? In his ongoing revelation, what new perspective and insights does he have for us? How can we use the gifts that he has given us (individually and collectively) to join in his mission?

The Ministry and Mission Overview (MMO) is Grafton Diocese's way of somehow getting our heads around this new landscape. It has already challenged us to look at new ways of being the church. This will involve much consultation over the coming months as we look at more specific plans, but let's approach all of this with an openness to God's call.

Gracious God, give us wisdom to perceive you, intellect to understand you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate upon you and a life to proclaim you, through the power of the spirit of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

(St Benedict)

MA Harvey 7.vi. 2019

Notes.

1. Walt Disney Pictures, 2018
2. *Turning Turtle Song* from *Mary Poppins Returns*
3. mccrindle.com.au, 2013
4. YouGov 2018



The latest version of the popular film *Mary Poppins* is entitled *Mary Poppins Returns*.¹ The Banks family is in financial trouble. The children, Annabel and John, decide to help out by selling a precious family heirloom, a Royal Doulton bowl belonging to their mother. However, the bowl becomes accidentally broken. So Mary Poppins and the children visit her cousin, Topsy, who repairs such things.

As they open the door to Topsy's place, the house turns around and around until they all find themselves seated on the ceiling. In a song, Topsy declares herself unable to function, let alone to help fix their precious bowl. As we might guess from her name (Topsy), this is a regular occurrence at Topsy's house. Every second Wednesday, from 9am until noon, Topsy's life turns upside down: she doesn't know "her up from her down, her east from her west, her topsy from her bottomsy!" She sings:

*Fast is slow, low is high, stop is go and that is why
Every second Wednesday is a hurdle
From 8 to 9, all is well
Then I roll over on my shell
And all because the world is turning turtle.*

*Day is night, dog is cat, black is white, thin is fat
That is why I'm loosening up my girdle
I cannot help this charming troop
Don't mock me, 'cause I'm in the soup
And why? Because the world is turning turtle*

*Oh, woe is me, I'm as opposite as I can be
I long for Thursdays when the world is drab.*²

As I reflect on Topsy's experience, I think it is remarkably similar to our own experience of being the church in a post-Christendom world. Our Anglican Church institution, our structures, our processes, our way of being present in communities, doesn't seem to make sense any more. Some things that worked for generations, aren't working so well. Through our institutional church eyes, we are having trouble perceiving the world around us. Perhaps some examples might help illustrate my point, remembering that the news isn't all bad, it's just difficult to make sense of.

Even if we do well at attracting newcomers and including them in the life of our local



