



President's Address

To the 37th Synod of the Diocese of Grafton

Saturday 26 September 2020

Dr Murray Harvey
Bishop of Grafton



*Some clergy following the Commissioning of The Rev'd Daryl McCullough
St John's Coffs Harbour, 21 January 2020*



*Clockwise from top left:
At St Andrew's Lismore;
Ordination of Paul Hodge;
Commissioning of Leanne
Harvey as CVAS Chaplain;
The Bishop with Youth
Reps at Synod 2019;
Climate Change Action at
Bishop Druit College.*

When the great Austrian composer Anton Bruckner died in 1896, his Ninth Symphony, *Dem lieben Gott* (To dearest God), the summation of his life's work, was left unfinished. While the first three movements of the Symphony were complete, the fourth movement consisted only of fragments and rough notes. He had told his friends that it was to be a triumphant Alleluia, a hymn of praise to God. I understand that when performing Bruckner's work, most orchestras play just the first three movements. Some have ventured to compose a fourth movement from existing fragments and inspired by a knowledge of his other works.

Stephen Cottrell, installed recently by Zoom as Archbishop of York, uses this illustration to talk about the work of the Church today as being analogous to the fourth movement.¹ He compares the first movement to the Old Testament, God's history with the people of Israel; the second to the life of Jesus Christ; the third to the life of the Church since the Day of Pentecost. The fourth is not yet written, or at least is in the process of being written, through the ongoing life and witness of Christians today.²

The responsibility of living out this fourth movement is great and is encapsulated in the Biblical concept of **stewardship** (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). When we think of stewardship our minds often turn to stewardship of money and buildings, but actually stewardship describes our whole vocation as Christians.³ To begin with, we share a stewardship of the first three movements, which God entrusts to us. All Christians are to be trustworthy stewards of the treasures of the Gospel and of God's people (1 Peter 4:10) so that the whole church can be built up in unity and faith. Stewardship is a living out of our encounter with the living Christ, acknowledging that everything comes from God and is to be administered faithfully on his behalf.⁴ Because it arises from God's grace, stewardship includes careful responsibility for the **mission** with which he has entrusted us. How do we live out this fourth movement in Grafton, engaging with this task of mission as his faithful stewards? In the words of the restructure document, how do we dare to live into God's future for us?

Given our experiences since the June 2019 Synod, I wonder if the sound of our fourth movement might appropriately be a Lament, rather than the celebratory Alleluia that Bruckner envisaged? Maybe a Communal Lament like Psalm 44:26

would be appropriate,⁵ *“Rise up, come to our help. Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love.”* The last twelve months have been dominated by many challenges. Firstly, widespread, destructive bushfires raged across our region for many months. At the same time, there were the pressures of the Consultation Period of the Diocesan Restructure. Then in March the COVID-19 crisis hit.

In relation to the **bushfires**, words are inadequate to summarise or convey the amount of suffering, fear, loss of life and property that was experienced right across our region. I am grateful to clergy and lay leaders in parishes and to Principals and staff in our schools who responded compassionately under difficult circumstances during the bushfire crisis. We were well served by Anglicare North Coast and their Disaster Recovery program. Volunteers worked for weeks and even months in church halls and other community facilities providing food, shelter, compassionate care and material assistance.

Since March we’ve been affected by the **COVID-19 Pandemic**. This is probably the greatest crisis we’ve faced as a diocese. The full impact is as yet unknown. I thank the Registrar, staff at the Bishop’s Registry, School Principals, Business Managers, Chairs of School Councils and others who have worked quickly and professionally to ensure the financial stability of the Diocese and Schools during the crisis. I also thank clergy and lay leaders in parishes and other ministry units, as well as teachers and staff in our schools, who have responded to the crisis locally. Implementation of the necessary COVID Safe restrictions has been onerous and time consuming. I thank everyone for their patience, diligence, professionalism and commitment to making our schools, churches and other facilities and ministries safe places for people to visit and work in. Once again, Anglicare North Coast has been at the forefront of our response to those most affected by the crisis caused by COVID-19 through addressing financial and mental health needs. At the same time, clergy and others responded quickly by ensuring that we had online worship options once we closed to Public Worship in March. I thank them for their giftedness, professionalism and time. Who knows when this crisis will end? We rely on God’s strength, wisdom and protection as we continue to live through it.



When reflecting on how the Spirit is prompting us and moving us during COVID-19 I recently wrote to the clergy about **adaptive leadership**. The ability to offer online worship and other forms of virtual community during this time has been a great gift. But if we go straight back to “the way we were” without thinking about how we can adapt and discern new directions, then I think we will have missed a tremendous opportunity. We have been offered the chance to move into new ways of being the church in our communities. Now is the time to facilitate longer-term change. Do we return to what we had, or do we go with the Spirit to somewhere new? Let’s make some of these new ways of being the church part of our ongoing culture. It might be timely for us to remember that, according to book of Acts, the disciples travelled lightly, adjusted their tactics often, and were constantly adapting to new learnings.⁶

COVID-19 has confirmed the fact that our current structures and approach to ministry are overdue for a change. Within 24 hours of the news that churches would close to Public Worship in March, two parishes were immediately in contact, stating that they would not be able to pay their stipend or meet other costs. COVID-19 unforgivingly and unapologetically reminded us (of what the restructure proposal was trying to say) that we have too many buildings to maintain, many small congregations with an older demographic and a very limited capacity, and that we are very reliant on Op Shops (that again are staffed by an older demographic of volunteers). Previous Grafton Synods, together with my predecessor, Dr Sarah Macneil, called for a **restructure of the mission and ministry of the Diocese**. I understand that this was high on your list of priorities at the Discernment Synod prior to the selection of a new Bishop. Therefore, since early last year, I have been part of a Working Group of the Bishop-in-Council that was charged with imagining what a new approach to mission and ministry might look like. The process that the Bishop-in-Council offered to the Diocese on 9 November 2019 initiated a Consultation Process that was a time of shared listening that continued through to late April (in some cases this was extended due to the unforeseen challenges of bushfires and later COVID-19). At this Synod I look forward to a consideration of the resulting document *Restructuring for Mission and Ministry: Daring to Live into God’s Future for Us*.

A **good news story** is from the new Parish of Byron (formerly Mullumbimby, Byron Bay and Bangalow) where the formation of a Ministry Area has led to the sharing/pooling of gifts, talents and other resources enabling the three former parishes to be more effective and efficient in their mission and ministry across the region. Another good news story is from St John's Church, Rappville (*pictured above*), in the



Parish of Casino. Rappville was very badly affected by the fires, losing the Village Hall, ten homes and other community resources. Following an approach by the Richmond Valley Council, which had learnt that St John's was on our list of proposed closures, it was sold to the Council and will be part of Rappville Common, a redeveloped community space that will incorporate the church, a new Village Hall and landscaping.

Apart from responding to the financial challenges of COVID-19, the Registrar and General Manager, Mr Chris Nelson, has been busy supporting and resourcing the **governance** structures of the diocese. In February we welcomed Annabelle Chaplain, a former colleague of mine from the School Council of St Margaret's Anglican Girls School, for a training session on governance for Bishop-in-Council and Corporate Trustees. She reminded us that good governance involves asking the right questions and seeking the right data. Since then we have been working through some questions she left for us and rethinking some of our governance practices and structures. Ongoing governance improvement is a high priority for the Bishop-in-Council, Corporate Trustees, Schools Commission, our School Councils and the Board of Anglicare North Coast.

The Venerable Tiffany Sparks has offered fine leadership and a positive outlook despite the fact that she arrived just in time for the bushfires and then COVID-19. From the point of view of the **Diocesan Leadership**, the restructure process, the bushfires and COVID-19 have each in their own way stretched us to

capacity. I am grateful to The Venerable Gail Hagon for her careful and insightful leadership as Mission Companion. Also a big thank you to the others who chaired Steering Committees, including The Very Rev'd Dr Greg Jenks, The Venerable Matthew Jones, The Venerable Stuart Webb, The Venerable Tiffany Sparks, Mr David Ford, The Rev'd Canon Matthew Smedley, and The Rev'd Christian Ford. The local clergy and lay leaders who participated in the Consultation Process are also to be thanked for their time and contributions. The Mission and Ministry Regions (MMRs) are now being replaced by Ministry Areas, Networks and of course the Archdeaconries as forums for Clergy and Licensed Ministers to meet for collegiality and to plan mission and ministry. I thank those who have contributed to MMRs in the past, especially those who have most recently been Mission Support Officers: The Reverends Christian Ford, Matthew Smedley, Ross Duncan and Lyn Bullard. MMRs played a key role in understanding and reviewing mission and ministry across the diocese and helped to prepare the way for and inform the Restructure proposals.



I give thanks for the many positive things that we can look back on from the twelve months. Online worship during the lockdown period paved the way for us to put together an act of worship for Pentecost to which most of the Ministry Units of the diocese contributed and which thousands of people viewed online. Our Diocesan Day of Prayer for COVID-19 also united us in prayer and worship, enabling us to share hope during those dark days. A review of our processes for discernment, formation and training has resulted in a clearer pathway for those

considering a call to ordained and lay ministry. This includes attractive printed literature and web based resources as well as a new approach whereby we offer our own series of Formation Intensives held here in Grafton. It was a joy to ordain The Rev'd Paul Hodge to the priesthood in October 2019 and to have a healthy number of candidates at Vocations Panel. We hosted our first Grafton Schools Symposium on Anglican Identity and Religious Education for the staff of our five schools and hope that this will be an annual event. We welcomed my colleague The Most Rev'd Greg Homeming, the Bishop of Lismore, to speak to us at Clergy Conference in February. It has been a privilege to enjoy Bishop Greg's friendship, collegiality and wisdom.



Many of our schools and parishes have been actively involved in action on the important issue of **Climate Change**. One example was the Climate Change Forum hosted by St Columba Anglican School Port Macquarie that was livestreamed to all of our schools, with a large audience on the day and online.

Twenty-nineteen offered the opportunity to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of **Anglicare North Coast**. Since then we have farewelled long term CEO Ms Estelle Graham and thanked her for her enormous contribution to the organisation over many years. Recently we welcomed Dr Leon Ankersmit as CEO. We look forward to his leadership in what is an exciting yet extremely challenging time for ANC in a sector that is increasingly competitive and where partnerships with larger organisations are key. A new Strategic Plan is currently being formulated

which envisages, amongst other things, closer working relationships with Ministry Units.

The work of the **Director of Professional Standards** is incredibly important and I thank Phillip Bonser for his professional and diligent work on this on behalf of the Diocese. Our prayers continue to be with survivors whose lives have been damaged by those from this diocese who should have been protecting them.

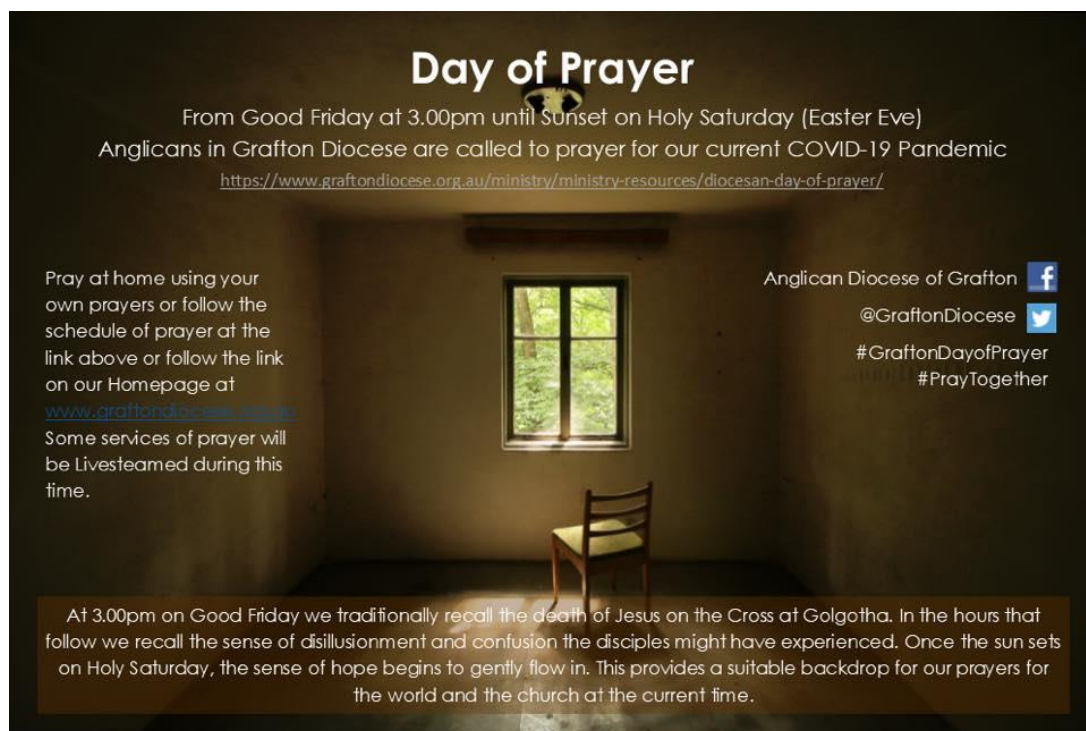
Finally, I would like to express my personal thanks to our **Metropolitan**, The Most Rev'd Dr Glenn Davies, Archbishop of Sydney, for his encouragement, advice and support. His leadership of the NSW Bishops during the COVID-19 crisis (our regular Zoom meetings have fostered a growing sense of collegiality and trust), as well as his liaising with the Premier and Government Ministers, has assisted all NSW Anglican Dioceses and made the COVID-19 crisis easier to navigate. He has delayed his retirement for a year in order to help his own diocese manage the crisis more smoothly.

To return to the illustration with which I started, I hope that at this Synod we can, with others, continue to compose a faithful and vibrant life of the church today – a daring to live into God's future. May this be the Fourth Movement of a great Holy Spirit-inspired symphony in praise to God.

The Rt. Rev'd Dr Murray Harvey
8 September 2020

Footnotes

1. Stephen Cottrell, *On Priesthood*. Hodder & Stoughton: London, 2020.
2. Interestingly a current working paper describes the Anglican Communion as a symphony. See: *Towards a Symphony of Instruments: A Historical and Theological Consideration of the Instruments of Communion of the Anglican Communion: A Working Paper*, The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith & Order (IASCUFO), Anglican Consultative Council, 2015.
3. Martin Luther. See Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000, pp.365-367.
4. For a theological discussion of stewardship, see T.A. Kantonen, *A Theology for Christian Stewardship*, 2011.
5. Verses 24-27 of this Psalm of Lament seek divine aid.
6. See for example Acts 13 - 15. Based on Professor Martyn Percy's comments about the ministry of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium (14:1-7) in contrast to Antioch of Pisidia (13:13-52).



Above. A Poster advertising the Diocesan Day of Prayer COVID-19 in April 2020



*Top: Assembled clergy after The Rev'd Anne Goode's Commissioning at Bellingen, 11 February 2020.
Bottom: Climate Action at St Columba Anglican School, Port Macquarie*

www.graftondiocese.org.au



*From top to bottom: The Bishop with students at St Columba Anglican School;
The COVID Cleaning Team at St Cuthbert's Tweed Heads;
Some Clergy at Ministry School, August 2020.*