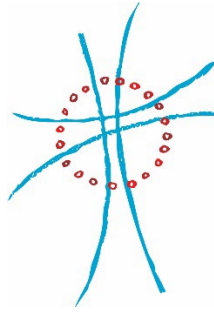


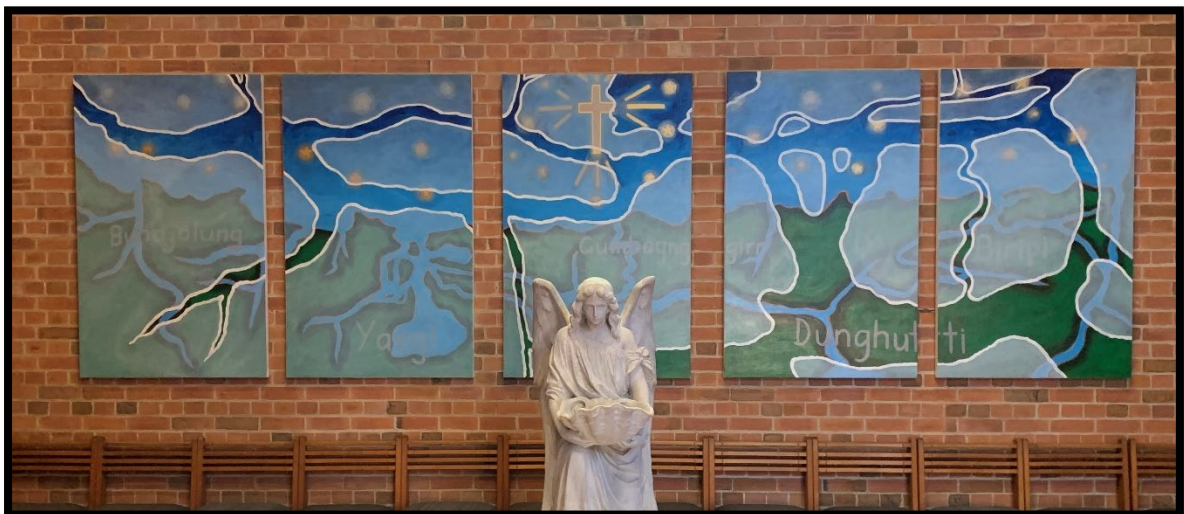
# President's Address to the Synod of the Diocese of Grafton 23-25 June 2023

Dr Murray Harvey  
Bishop of Grafton





I acknowledge the Bundjalung, Arakwal, Yaegl, Githabul, Gumbayngirr, Dunghutti and Birpai peoples, the traditional custodians of the lands on which the Diocese of Grafton is based. I pay tribute and respect to the elders of these nations and peoples, both past, present and emerging, acknowledge their continuing connection to the land and waters, and thank them for their protection of the mountains, hinterland, waters and coastline since time immemorial.



This impressive painting by Frances Belle Parker provides a stunning backdrop in the Baptistry of Grafton Cathedral. This work evokes the life-giving capacities of the Clarence River and reminds us that we stand on country that has long been sacred to the indigenous peoples of this ancient land.

The visit of the **Archbishop of Canterbury** in October 2022 was the first visit of an Archbishop of Canterbury to the Diocese of Grafton in over seventy years. It was a highlight of what was in other respects a challenging year. In my Presidential Address last year I spoke about the devastating floods of February and March 2022. Archbishop Welby's visit was in response to the floods - he specifically requested it for this reason. The visit was a great encouragement to the people of the Lismore region and to the wider diocese.

He met representatives of Lismore Parish, Anglicare North Coast and other organisations and community groups that played a part in disaster recovery in the region. He visited flood victims in their homes to see the damage and hear their stories, as well as talking to people in the street and visiting shops and businesses. The Archbishop has spoken extensively about climate change, and has been at the forefront of climate change initiatives. I know that Archbishop Welby, his wife Caroline, and his team were profoundly affected by their Lismore visit. He will use it to inform his speeches and other undertakings in relation to environmental action at the highest level.

During his visit the Archbishop briefly spent time with the Ordinands on Retreat at Ballina at that time which was an encouragement to them also. He also gave a public lecture entitled *Building Peace in Robust Diversity* at Emmanuel Anglican College, challenging us all to be agents of reconciliation in all our relationships. This theme of **reconciliation** is obviously a passion for Justin Welby<sup>1</sup> as it should be for all Christian disciples. It is a theme that runs through this Presidential Address.

On behalf of the whole diocese, I thank all those in the Registry, the Senior Clergy Team, Emmanuel Anglican College, Anglicare North Coast and the Parishes of Lismore and Ballina who put so much effort over several months into planning the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury and his team.

Since time immemorial, our **First Nations peoples** here on the North Coast have cared for and protected the mountains, hinterland, waters and coastline. At this Synod we have been privileged to welcome The



Rev'd Canon Professor Glenn Loughrey back to Grafton Diocese. Glenn has challenged us, above all, to listen. Our National Aboriginal Bishop, Chris McLeod, says that the wisdom of listening, as Jesus listened, is a forgotten art. He writes that *Largely ... as a nation we have not been very good at listening to the small and often silenced voices.*

Part of this is to listen to a gracious invitation from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of our land, known as the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, a call to all Australians to create a better future together. Shamefully, Australia is the only first-world nation with a colonial history that doesn't recognise its original inhabitants in its Constitution.

The pursuit of reconciliation and justice is fundamental to being followers of Jesus (eg., 2 Cor 5:18-19). On this journey of reconciliation Christians can lead by example. Jesus' way is one of truth, justice, love and hope. Only together and with the deep listening called for by the Statement from the Heart, together with prayer, lament, and collective action for justice, can we build a strong reconciled Australia. I am thankful that faith leaders from across the country have strongly endorsed this walking together to a better future together. My [Pastoral Letter](#) on this topic expresses my support for the recognition of our Indigenous peoples in the Constitution. Let's all approach this issue with generosity and vision and not fall victim to the scaremongering and fear tactics of some.

In response to a motion at Synod last year we have commenced a Reconciliation Action Planning process (RAP). The Bundjalung, Gumbayngirr, Arakwal, Yaegl, Githabul, Dunghutti and Birpai peoples of our region have a rich history and culture and I look forward to continuing to learn from them as we walk together through the RAP process.

In a time of division and fragmentation that affects all aspects of society Anglicans have a unique opportunity and responsibility to be agents of reconciliation.

The theme of reconciliation is also relevant to our relationships within the **Anglican Communion**. Since last Synod we have seen the establishment of a new denomination in Australia, known as the Diocese of the Southern Cross. Because it has caused confusion and distress amongst many Anglicans, I wrote a [Pastoral Letter](#) about it to clarify matters. Briefly put, the name of this new entity is misleading - it is not a Diocese of the Anglican Church of Australia.

As Bishop Stephen Pickard<sup>2</sup> stated recently, *Anglican life has always involved living with tensions, apparent paradoxes, and a degree of messiness for the sake of comprehending the whole truth. It involves honouring, valuing, and staying in relationship with others with whom we differ. This has not always been an easy or simple matter. But such a commitment is premised on a deeply held belief that we only find the fullness of truth together and not apart. We bear with each other even as Christ bore our sufferings and gave witness to the grace and power of God.*

Many in our Communion have been outraged by the decision of the Church of England to offer the blessing of same-sex marriages in church. I am deeply thankful that in Australia the bishops are still having constructive and respectful discussions on this divisive issue. This involves listening. I ask for continued patience as we listen to one another and seek a way forward in this province of the Anglican Communion. Personally, I value being part of a church where differences, and diversity of gifts, convictions and perspectives are welcomed as adding to the rich tapestry of God's wisdom in the Body of Christ. As the statement quoted above goes on to say, *this is the way of a truly comprehensive Anglicanism; something we believe is critical in times of conflict, division and fragmentation.*

Together with other Chancellors and Bishops, our Chancellor, His Honour Richard Cogswell SC, and I were invited to meet with Jayne Ozanne in Sydney in March. Jane is an international campaigner for LGBT+ rights and is a faithful Anglican. The meeting was challenging yet humbling. We still have a long way to go in making LGBT+ people feel welcomed and included in our ministry units. We can learn a lot from our Grafton Anglican Schools in this regard.

In a time of division and fragmentation that affects all aspects of society, including our own Communion, we have a responsibility to uphold and pursue a vision of unity and reconciliation. God wills fellowship.

It is now over five years since the Synod called for a **restructure** of the diocese and since [Restructing for Mission and Ministry: Daring to Live into God's Future for Us](#) was adopted at the 2020 Synod much has been done. With the closure and sale of most of the identified worship centres having now taken place, we are now approaching the review of those worship centres that were classified by the Synod as needing a review at a future point. Allowing for delays due to COVID-19 and floods, this is now due in September this year.

We continue to embed the new models of ministry, including Ministry Areas and Networks. It is exciting to see the Ministry Initiatives Trust, set up from a percentage of the revenue from the sale of worship centres, enabling creative ministries. It is also encouraging to see Community Ministers being licensed in Ministry Areas, thus living out the vision for pioneer ministry. The Transitional Ministry Districts have agency to explore what ministry and mission can look like in their community under this new model. Encouraging also has been a more intentional connection between schools and parishes.

While more will be said at other times and in other places about the forthcoming retirement of our Registrar and General Manager, **Mr Chris Nelson**, it's appropriate for me to record here our gratitude for his outstanding service to the Diocese of Grafton and the Anglican Church of Australia.

The Diocese is in a much stronger position financially and in terms of governance, administration and reputation than it was in March 2014 when Chris commenced as Registrar and General Manager. Chris has assisted the Bishop-in-Council and the Corporate Trustees to undertake significant improvements in the administration of the diocese, restructuring and improving our governance. As Bishop I have benefitted from Chris' extensive knowledge, professionalism,

personal integrity and support. His deep faith in Jesus Christ has guided and strengthened Chris in his vocation as Registrar.

With her permission I quote my predecessor, The Rt Rev'd Dr Sarah Macneil, who writes about Chris in this way:

*A man of deep faith, intellect, integrity and great skill and experience, Chris was absolutely integral to the work that was done to put the Diocese on a stronger financial and administrative footing, to address the impact of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and to rebuild trust across the Diocese. He was a trusted colleague, always offering good advice and willing to disagree if he thought a proposed course of action was not the best available. Completely reliable (despite supporting Queensland in the State of Origin), thoughtful and wise, Chris ran a happy and efficient Diocesan office and was greatly respected by those who worked with him. He was, in my view, the Registrar we needed at that time and a gift from God to the Diocese.*

Thank you Chris Nelson.

I conclude this Presidential Address with a presentation about the 2022 Lambeth Conference, the text of which is not included here.

Dr Murray Harvey  
Bishop of Grafton

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1. *The Power of Reconciliation*. Justin Welby. Bloomsbury (London), 2022.
  2. *A Comprehensive Anglicanism: Upholding the Church's Unity and Witness to the Gospel*. Stephen Pickard, May 2023.



*Leanne and Murray at The Old Palace, Canterbury during Lambeth 2022*





*Above from top: Q&A with the Archbishop of Canterbury at Emmanuel Anglican College; The newly ordained are presented with their Goodies Bags from ABM; Members of the Bishop in Council and Corporate Trustees hear from Uncle Paul Paulson about the RAP process.*





*Above from top: The Bishop with the 41<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Royal NSW Regiment at St Andrew's Lismore; The Bishop with SCAS students in the Cathedral; The Opening of the ELC at Lindisfarne Anglican Grammar School.*





*Selfie madness at Lambeth 2022.*



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