

2021 Synod Report

It didn't feel like 2 years since we had last gathered in the beautiful setting of Churchie's *Morris Hall* last weekend, but in any case it was so good to be back among friends and to reconnect! We returned to the familiar horseshoe layout seating and with barebones catering (but the wonderful café *Arches* onsite, opened over the weekend especially for us, more than compensated for that!) as well as the usual convivial atmosphere of ~320 committed, enthusiastic Anglicans gathered together. The strong singing was the main give-away of that enthusiasm!

Synod began with an uplifting Eucharist at St John's cathedral last Friday night (*24 September*) and, on Saturday morning (*25 September*), Archbishop opened his address acknowledging the huge demands placed on parishes, schools and community services as they adapted to pandemic constraints, projecting that for many of us, an online service delivery will remain a '*new normal*'. One reasonably persistent request he has received over the past year and a half has been for authorisation to use individual cups, so to allow for the blessed elements in both kinds. While Archbishop appreciates the utility of such a step for Anglican practice, he argued very strongly for keeping continuity with our traditions, derived from our historic and primitive Church, in sharing a common cup. Nevertheless, he will be working with our Primate and other bishops to review how we observe the holy sacraments going forward, should pandemic restraints persist (*as seems likely*). This synod showed it as an issue many in our Diocese feel very strongly about.

Another issue that engendered a deep discussion was the recent enactment of legislation on *voluntary assisted dying*, passed by the Queensland parliament a couple of weeks ago. Anglicans are now planning how they will respond across their various facilities to abide by these new rules when they come into effect, meet the needs & expectations of their clients as well as accommodating conscientious objections among their professional staff. Archbishop indicated this issue raises great fear among indigenous community members and likely many others, as well as placing additional demands on service provisioning that will require funding & delivery restructures. This topic was widely canvassed at the lay conference on Sunday morning (*26 September*), straight after the morning chapel service. We can be grateful the legislation doesn't come into force until early 2023, giving time to explore and adapt to, what for many is, a challenging issue in need of informed spiritual guidance.

The Diocese has been undertaking research into *intimate partner violence* (IPV) as experienced by those identifying as Anglican. This targeted research and resulting early stage proposals unlocked a sustained debate and some hostility on the synod floor. It's unclear at this stage how any Diocesan IPV policy will be consolidated nor its impact on parish practice in the future. Nevertheless, there are a small number of committed Anglicans in our Diocese, both clergy and lay, enabling a sophisticated analysis of a toxic & distressing issue that, whether directly or indirectly, affects us all. We can expect IPV and its adjacent pathologies to serve as a continuing focus in future gatherings as we discern, together, beneficial next steps.

At our last regular Synod in 2019, Archbishop experimented with the *Open Spaces* format, where any one can propose a topic which is then allocated a time and a space and those interested in collaborating on that topic could attend. Findings and furthering proposals were then submitted for the Synod record. Unfortunately, the uncertainties of the pandemic era meant that format was not adopted this year but it will return, Archbishop assured us.

The core focus of the Diocese as enabling a flourishing church served as a foundational theme. Archbishop defined these dynamic values as **proclaiming** Christ, **servicing** the community and the deepening of our lives through **worship & learning**. These values apply even where a small number of people gather in Christ's name! We were warned to resist a move into hardening of fixed views that lead to exclusive groupings of thought & practice, resisting the contributions or lived experiences of others that may share differing world views.

The logic underpinning these values fed into a new theme Archbishop has been championing, which is the nature of our particular brand of Christian faith he labels **comprehensive Anglicanism**. This view identifies as a distinguishing feature our respect for difference, avoiding an exhausted & hostile state of mutual suspicion & non-communication and instead approaching complexity as a vocation, towards God's larger truth. Sadly, examples of these dark-side effects are too readily evident in our Communion, even within our Province. The Lambeth Conference of 1968 described the idea like this:

Comprehensiveness is an attitude of mind which Anglicans have learned from the thought-provoking controversies of their history. Comprehensiveness demands agreement on fundamentals, while tolerating disagreements on matters in which Christians may differ without breaking communion. In the mind of an Anglican, comprehensiveness is not compromise, nor is it to bargain one truth for another. Rather, it implies that the apprehension of truth is a growing thing: we only gradually succeed in 'knowing the truth'.

In terms of how Anglicans are positioned in relation to their unique history and the future of Christian belief, His Grace, William Temple, former Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote in 1942:

*Our special character and our peculiar contribution to the Universal Church arises from the fact that we have combined in our one fellowship the traditional **Faith and Order** of the Catholic Church with the **immediacy of approach** to God through Christ to which the Evangelical Churches bear witness and the **freedom of intellectual inquiry**, whereby correlation of the Christian revelation and advancing knowledge is constantly effected.*

As you contemplate these profound words in relation to your own positioning as a comprehensive Anglican, you will appreciate that Synod is not **ONLY** taken up with passing arcane canon rules or debating minute frictions of process (*although we do lots of that!*). The gathering also allows an ongoing examination & growth of our faith and the values we pursue, to the Glory of God. At St Peter's, we fully resonate with that quest!

It continues to be our privilege to represent our parish at Synod. We welcome any questions you may have.

Dr Jason Zagami

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