

## **Introduction**

Beloved in Christ,

I count it a great and wonderful privilege to stand before you as your Bishop and greet you in the Lord's Name.

I respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of this land on which we are meeting; which in itself was a meeting place for the Mulwaree, Wollondilly, Gudungurra, Dharrook, Tharawal, Tarlo, Lachlan, Pajong, Parramarragoo, Cookmal, Burraburra and Ngunnawal people. Together we salute the contributions of Aboriginal Australians in the life of our Church, community and nation.

I want to share with you some of my reflections on *my very brief* ministry as Bishop to this point in time and to offer some thoughts about our way forward together.

My purpose in delivering this, my first Synod 'Charge' is to speak from my heart about our future.

I hope that over the next few days, we take the opportunity to discuss what I've been referring to as a '20/20 Vision': a revised diocesan mission plan taking us from the year 2010 to the year 2020.

It's a vision that builds on what's gone before. It's a vision that counts everybody in – because we all have a future in Christ. Amen?

## **The Journey So Far**

Since my consecration on that stifling day in January, the past seven months have flashed by at a rapid rate; as have the kilometres – some 30,000 last count.

With Jane, I have thoroughly enjoyed our visits to all corners of our vast diocese. Your love and fellowship and hospitality have been exemplary; especially the people of Narooma/Bodalla – we arrived 95 minutes late for lunch after we took the short cut from Canberra – via Eden. Such grace!

We have been especially struck by your prayerfulness not only for us as a couple but also for the needs of others.

Prayer, among other things, shapes our thinking and conforms our lives, our hearts and minds to that of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Our observation of the diocese of Canberra and Goulburn is that you are a praying diocese, you are people who are open and sensitive to the work and leading of the Holy Spirit.

Your walk of faith and life of prayer has been a tremendous encouragement in our journey. And so we thank you and we bless you.

Since becoming your Bishop I have read of St. Paul's love for the communities of faith that God had placed in his care with new eyes.

The opening remarks in the letter to the Christians in Ephesus, strike me deeply, as the Apostle writes:

*Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.*

*I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead.*

Ephesians 1:15-20. *New Living Translation (NLT) Holy Bible. New Living Translation copyright © 1996, 2004 by Tyndale Charitable Trust. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers.*

Dear friends, as we have visited your homes, house groups and parishes, your prayerfulness, and the love you show to others is something I give thanks for continually.

There is also clear evidence of your godly outlook on life; your passion to see the world set straight, and to see human lives, indeed the whole natural order, restored and cared for runs very deep. So these Spirit-directed words give me hope because I can see God working powerfully through you.

## Observations

Jane and I really have seen God's gracious working through his people in this diocese:

- I've seen faith at work through a ministry to young adults with disabilities which has now inspired a diocesan programme of ministry to people who are often left on the outside in life.
- When Opportunity shops in country towns build bridges so that when residents enter they are greeted by kind and loving assistants and experience the ministry of hospitality and care, hope takes root.
- I know love is at work when local Anglicans organise a debutante ball in a rural town and give their community a cause for great celebration and an opportunity to hear about God's love for us in Christ.
- When young adults invest their lives into those who live in disadvantaged public housing communities - I see them visiting residents, offering food and friendship. It's action that speaks loudly about their trust in Christ.
- When Anglican schools teach children from all walks of life the values of God's Kingdom by taking students on pilgrimages and field trips to third world contexts, girls and boys come face to face with reality of poverty and injustice and they respond by wanting to make the world a better place.
- When small teams of women and men launch out in faith to start new churches on Canberra's burgeoning urban fringe. They have almost no resources but are confident in Christ and convinced of their charter and call.
- Those who work in aged care facilities as teams visit residents, sitting with people and reading stories; running sing-a-longs and very simple social events; and comforting families in times of grief and uncertainty, hope is always present.
- When I go to the Cathedral I am reminded of the complexity and marvellous diversity of our diocese - where urban, regional, rural and coastal communities live side by side - and the unique role of the Cathedral which, as the mother church, keeps us in touch with the essential nature of the diocese.
- I see love roll up its sleeves when Christians gather their friends and neighbours (in the town and from surrounding properties) to work through the implications of a new road bypass that threatens their livelihoods.

- When energetic Anglicans run playgroups, men's sheds, parenting classes, homework clubs, computer classes and the like they get a reputation for their 'connectedness' and their love.

When teams of business people are praying, to reach those in our centres of commerce, government and the military with the gospel of grace, the quiet faith of God's saints is stirring.

I see hope at work when our recent Back to Church Sunday initiative saw hundreds of people take the step of inviting a friend to come to church. What a triumph. Thank you.

I see hope at work through all our diocesan agencies and Commissions - groups including: our Environment Commission, the Diocesan Schools Commission, Synergy Youth, St Mark's National Theological Centre, our university colleges and Anglicare.

There are so many more wonderful stories I could tell of our saints going out to people where they are and serving them. The women and men, boys and girls of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn are getting on with living holy, Jesus-centred lives.

Bishop Trevor's very helpful review of the Diocesan Mission Plan shows us the outworking of faith, hope and love and we have much to celebrate.

I see so much hope at work because our Diocese is deeply grounded in God's mission, God's passion for our world.

## **The Ground of Our Hope**

You may recall that foundational to your diocesan plan was nothing less than Jesus' declaration of Jubilee.

In Luke's Gospel (Luke 4.18-21, NRSV), Jesus declared,

*The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour... [Jesus] began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*

My friends, we follow a God who sent Jesus into the world to make salvation a reality. The Kingdom of God, inaugurated by Jesus has real world implications.

Jesus declared that violence would be overcome by love.

That oppression and exclusion would be set aside in favour of openness and welcome.

That death would be swallowed up by life.

Jesus declared that access to God was open to anyone who wanted it.

Jesus declared that freedom, and love and reconciliation was the order of a brand new day.

This was Jesus' hope for the future. It was cemented by his crucifixion. It was assured by his resurrection. It was guaranteed when Jesus ascended into heaven. The world got a little foretaste when the Holy Spirit was poured out that Pentecost morning and we look forward to its completion when he comes again.

As God's people, we should find that our whole life gets caught up in God. Word and Sacrament open us up to God's presence and they usher us into God's new future.

The mission of God flows right through the heart of our Diocesan vision.

*Under God we want to see Anglican Christians develop a deeper confidence in the gospel of Christ so that they enthusiastically live for Him and share his love in their communities and networks. We want to see Christ so proclaimed as Lord and Saviour of all that many will trust him, and join us in authentic Anglican communities of faith where we love God and one another, and are equipped to serve Him in His world.*

It is this hope that nudges us forward from our present position to a future where God might transform our families, our workplaces, our streets, our neighbourhoods making them all that they can and should be.

That said, we are not without our challenges.

## **Challenges**

My colleague, Wayne Brighton has spent the last six months gathering information about our life together to find a set of indicators to see how we've been tracking between 1997 and 2007.

Details of this report are appended to this charge (Appendix A).

The picture is one of a changing world, in the city and in rural and regional centres.

We know that constant change can make the strongest people feel tired. Most of us feel tired, not because we're keeping on top of the changes but because we feel like we're always falling behind.

When a dear friend returned to parish ministry after serving the church in a variety of other capacities, this person said to me, "when I did my training and went through formation in the 1970s, it was for a different world."

Ministry today demands things from us for which many were never trained or prepared. And although Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, we can find it hard to help people to see Jesus clearly when the world in which they live is constantly changing.

- According to national Census data, the general population across the diocese grew by nearly 8% or 48,000 people between 1996 and 2006.

About half were in the ACT. In NSW, the growth was concentrated in Queanbeyan, the coastal towns and near Goulburn. This was slightly below the state average and about three quarters the national average.

Had we as Anglicans kept pace with population growth, an additional 10,000 Anglicans could have called this diocese home. As it happens, some five and a half thousand fewer people called themselves Anglicans compared with a decade earlier.

Much of this loss is concentrated among those aged under 40.

- What we have seen is the category of 'no religion' become one of the biggest 'religious' groups in many of our towns and villages. In the ACT and Wagga it grew by 25% over the decade and by over 40% in rural areas of the diocese.

But as Bishop Tom Frame encourages us, this doesn't mean that all of them are hostile or antagonistic towards faith. It means instead that many people have become disconnected from the life of our faith communities, particularly among those aged under 40.

While many of our churches struggle to keep their young adults as they move out seeking study and work opportunities elsewhere, middle aged couples often with young children are moving in, taking advantage of a lifestyle change. The reality is that as many as two thirds of the young adults remain behind, they are just not involved in our churches.

- The average age in many of our communities is around 35 years. By comparison the average age of people participating in our churches is closer to 55, nearly a twenty year age gap.

Is this the picture of what you see on a Sunday? I know whenever I visit a parish, I see a lot of people my age and above, albeit with more hair, but sadly, with fewer and fewer people in their 30s and their 20s and their teens. My friends, we have to find more effective ways of engaging them because they are simply not coming to us like they once did.

These trends flow through our parish returns. Now, I know that figures from parish returns may not be all that accurate. The exercise sometimes asks questions that parishes can't answer easily. I know the temptation to ignore the return because it feels like an impossible job when there's more than enough to do or when the exercise feels depressing.

Nevertheless, there are some things we should note:

- The number of children baptised, young people confirmed, young adults married and funerals in our church have all fallen markedly.

Now the pastoral offices are signs of grace that provide positive connections to the local church and entry points into the community of faith.

Although there are many reasons for these changes, the effect is that fewer people are connecting with our church and the life of faith. These services are becoming 'optional' as people turn to civil celebrants to mark these important life transitions.

My friends, too many people are no longer coming to us and they are missing out on opportunities to encounter the good news of Jesus and to meet other members of his generous family.

- In 2007, 44% of our ministry units offered no children's programs, double the amount from 10 years ago. What children's ministries did exist, many had become smaller in size.

Although the returns don't show anything about youth and young adult ministries, I fear that our talent pool for future leaders has been drying up.

Yet the news isn't all bad. The good news is that many of our churches are finding ways to grow in this challenging environment. If some can do it, potentially we all can.

- In the last five years, nearly half our parishes saw their regular attendance increase.

Much of this growth came from our parishes with attendance ranging between 51 and 350 people.

Of the top 10, seven were in country towns and they included the full spectrum of church traditions, led by women and men.

Five of these had turned a situation of declining attendance around.

Of course, the picture is mixed. In many of our country areas, the smallest parishes are often getting numerically smaller.

Many no doubt fear for their long term prospects, after all, having already shifted to part-time arrangements they must be asking themselves: what happens next?

My hope is that by working together, we can find ways to be more creative where the model of full-time stipendiary ministry is no longer viable. The awful truth is that whenever we close a place of worship, most people end up going nowhere rather than going somewhere else. We need to find creative ways to make ministry effective in all our local villages.

- When we look at estimates of people attending less than once a month, perhaps as family and work commitments allow, the decline maybe as high as -29%.

It would seem that within the ACT, more people are coming less often than before. In NSW, where irregular attendance was much more significant for our country parishes, the drop makes all the difference.

- Although our diocese appeared to grow in the decade to 2001, since 2002 our diocese has seen a small fall in estimated regular attendance, somewhere around -2.1% in five years.

This may not seem like much, but it does mean that those parishes that are growing can't grow fast enough to offset those who leave and are never replaced.

I know that numbers on a page do not tell the whole story; human life cannot be reduced to a graph or a chart.

Beloved, these indicators are not about blame and responsibility. They show us that our environment is changing and they encourage us to rethink and refocus. The church throughout its history has faced similar demographic and social changes before.

As they say, the only constant is change, and more change is on the way. State and Territory Governments have done some population projections over the next 30 years for our region.

Now projections are not predictions, nor are they policy targets. Fertility rates, migration patterns and life expectancy will no doubt change in the future. Added to this, is of course, the impact of the global financial crisis, the reality of climate change, and uncertain water resources.

So then, what might we expect of the future in our diocese?

Governments in our region forecast a population increase of 85,000 by 2016 with it slowly tapering off to about 60,000 each and every decade after that. Many will call the ACT and Queanbeyan home. Goulburn, the South Coast and Wagga are all expected to grow strongly too.

By 2036, over 900,000 people will call this region home. From our current population base of 685,000 people, that's an increase of about 32%.

The social and environmental challenges associated with this possible population growth will be very significant. The question is - how will we respond? Will they have the opportunity to see life from God's perspective? How will we help them see that discipleship means playing their part in achieving a sustainable future?

If the past is any indicator, I think we can safely say that many of those growing and moving into our patch are likely to have different values and live different lifestyles. More people will probably not have any kind of Christian heritage at all.

We might reasonably expect that there will more people lost in poverty. More will find themselves imprisoned by addiction, more will find themselves living longer, isolated from friends and family.

We might find such prospects disheartening. But don't forget, it is precisely for these reasons that God sent Jesus into our world.

Our streets and neighbourhoods, our villages and our suburbs will need the kind of Jubilee, the kind of hope for a new life that only Jesus can bring.

Our only question is, can we meet this challenge?

And so I find myself coming back to the Apostolic prayer for the believers in Ephesus, those living in Asia's biggest commercial hub in that corner of the world.

For all those who lived in the shadow of the great temple of Artemis, one of the wonders of the ancient world, the Apostle gives thanks to God for them.

And what does the Apostle ask God for on their behalf? An easier time? That they wouldn't be insignificant but they could run the city properly? Maybe that the local community would be nicer?

The Apostle knows God has planted his people in Ephesus for a purpose. God's kingdom will only grow if God's people are outwardly focussed.

Paul asks God that they might have more wisdom and insight, that their hearts might be flooded with light to understand the confident hope God gives to all those that he calls. He prays that they might know that the mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that lives in them. The apostle prays that they might enter into this new reality.

This new reality will change their world, not through conquest and the sword but by patient, open and generous lives.

I find myself praying for the same things that were on the apostle's heart. My friends, I find myself praying that we will understand the incredible greatness of God's power, the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead to see God's kingdom change our world.

## **Bishop Stuart Thinking 'Out Loud'**

So let me think out loud for a few moments.

It's really the fruit of all those conversations we've had together since I arrived. It's a big snapshot of where I sense you've been led by God and where we might go in the future.

It might be a surprise to many that I don't have a preconceived plan, a blueprint to roll out. Instead, I can only offer you a pathway by which we can take the journey together.

These hopes may sound big – but please be assured - they won't all come at once. These are really something that we will grow into with time.

I want to offer you six ‘P’s’ for contemplation and prayer. At the risk of sounding trite, I want something that we all can remember as we work through our Synod agenda together.

The first is, not surprisingly, **Prayer.**

Sister and brothers, I know that you are women and men of prayer – by virtue of the daily Office, the diocesan prayer guide, your own personal devotional program, in small groups and services and the like.

So do please continue to pray.

In the face of unbelief, hardness of heart, drought, personal tragedy, confusion, ill health, doubt and fatigue, we need to pray. Yes, many of you have prayerfully endured trial and uncertainty. We have met such people over the past seven months (and we’ll be hearing some of their stories in the course of this Synod).

I would like us to join together to pray for the people and places where we live. That is, to pray for those who live there, for all those who are arriving, for those who are leaving and those who are left behind. Only by prayer will we know the riches of the hope that lives within.

I hope that we can introduce Prayer Gatherings in our Archdeaconries (five in all – per year) where all of God’s people can seek His will and presence in the lives of people known to us who do not know God’s love for them in Jesus.

Archdeacon Ian Palmer has generously taken carriage of this schedule for 2009 and the ‘roll-out’ will begin after Synod.

## **Planning**

We have an excellent diocesan vision in *Growing Communities Confident in Christ*.

It is a foundation that I wholeheartedly endorse and embrace. It is my desire that we keep building on this great foundation. We have the opportunity to be God’s dynamic presence in the world by:

- proclaiming the gospel;
- providing for the worship of God;
- nurturing new believers;
- responding to human need through loving service;
- seeking to transform the unjust structures of society; and
- striving to safeguard the integrity of creation.

To help us all realise our part in God's mission, I propose to rework our archdeaconry structure, so that support and advice can be accessed where it is needed.

I have appointed five new regional Archdeacons (whom we met and collated at the Synod Eucharist). Archdeacons Mark, Genieve, Ian, Susanna and Ian will work within their localities to develop Archdeaconry plans or strategies for mission and outreach.

This is the foundation of what will become our 2020 Vision, our diocesan roadmap to the future.

I hope that these regional archdeaconry plans for mission and outreach will come to the Synod in 2010 for endorsement and blessing.

Good planning is not an iron cage, but a platform to find opportunities to share the hope we know. A big plan from central office won't work. It takes local people, hearing from God, engaging with local neighbourhood. With your help, we can encourage 'grass roots' or local initiatives that will best serve local contexts.

To further assist the Archdeacons I will appoint, in December, a full-time Diocesan Mission Facilitator, John Barnes (currently with Church Army in Australia). John is presently working as a consultant with 14 of our ministry units.

Together, we will help each archdeaconry identify practical steps by which they might share the hope they have with the community that surrounds them.

Archdeacon Anne Ranse is Archdeacon of the Household of Deacons. While the deacon's role is not unique to this diocese it is a great resource we need to develop more fully. The essential role of the deacon is that of connecting, in a visible way, the worshipping community with the wider community in which it is embedded. Archdeacon Anne will be exploring this as part of our overall mission planning.

Archdeacon Anne will also manage the Disabilities Ministries portfolio and Archdeacon Chris Short the Chaplaincy portfolio. My dream is that under their leadership our capacity to reach the most vulnerable and isolated people in our communities will grow and deepen. Do pray for them.

Bishop Trevor and I will provide support, training and assistance to our Archdeacons. I think Lew Hitchick heard me describe them as the **SALT** team: Strategic Archdeaconry Leadership Team. I like that. Savour and flavour is what they will bring to our communities!

The Episcopal group is a focus of coordination for the diocese. The Group consists of Bishop Trevor Edwards, Dean Phillip Saunders and myself. Each of us has a particular role to enhance the planning of the diocese.

I have changed the title of the Dean to *Dean of Canberra and Goulburn* to reflect the role of Dean in the wider diocese. The Cathedral community is itself seeking to assist the wider diocesan family. This includes freeing Dean Phillip Saunders to engage in fuller diocesan work.

## **Preparing**

Good plans will only bear fruit when people take discipleship formation seriously.

Our diocese has a very solid foundation of training programs that have been built up over the past few years.

St Mark's does a wonderful job preparing people for ministry and Anglicare helps many to undertake practical service.

I am thankful for the treasures that they are. It is my intention that we keep building on this work.

In the New Year, our Diocesan Mission Facilitator will be available for groups and churches that require help to unlock opportunities for outreach and mission.

Next year, Archdeacon Genieve Blackwell and her team are planning to launch a Diocesan Centre for Lay Ministry and Mission that will be based at the Cathedral and training will be made available *in situ* across the five Archdeaconry regions.

Our Diocese will also take a fresh look at all our pre and post ordination training under the leadership of a full-time Diocesan Ministry Development and Training Director, Bishop Trevor Edwards.

Bishop Trevor has served his parish of Wanniasa faithfully over the past six and a half years and I am most grateful to them for being willing to release him for this pivotal diocesan role. The Diocese owes a huge debt to St Matthew's for their generosity in sustaining his Episcopal ministry to date. While Bishop Trevor will be based in Jamieson House, his new role will mean a greater capacity to assist leaders throughout the Diocese.

A growing church needs to be growing new leaders. Conversations with a wide range of people have suggested to me that the Diocese would benefit greatly from a Gap Year program wherein young adults will have the opportunity of a ministry experience alongside structured learning and formation processes that will not only prepare them for a life of witness in general but may also spark their interest for a lifetime of vocational ministry.

## **Presenting**

Well equipped women and men are better able, in my view, to present Jesus to our hungry and thirsty world.

Presenting Jesus happens through clear proclamation and what might be described as incarnational living.

God is passionate about making life better. To borrow from Philippians 2, my hope is that we'll shine for Jesus as we're up to our elbows in justice and advocacy issues, taking the initiative in environmental and social welfare matters.

Now, much of this we do well – and our Archdeaconry plans will, please God, address these areas – but I'm asking you to consider carefully how we present Jesus by our words and our actions – because we make the life of faith real to people.

My hope is that as Christians engaged in God's mission with the people of the ACT and south east NSW, that we will work to create a better world, transformed by God's presence.

## **Partnering**

Resources are finite. And that is why it will be essential for us to enter into life giving partnerships with people and organisations whose values align with ours.

Our Archdeaconry plans will speak to this notion of partnering with organisations that share God's passion. For too long, we've worked in silos, independently of each other.

Consequently, I believe that our Archdeaconry plans should intentionally engage more holistically with agencies that are a part of our diocesan family like:

- Anglicare
- Synergy Youth
- St. Marks
- The Cathedral
- Cursillo
- Religious Orders, such as the Franciscans and the Community of Celebration
- Our diocesan schools
- Mother's Union
- The Anglican Development Fund
- Our various commissions and so it goes.

Mission is a 'team sport', as it were, and my hope for the future is that we can find effective ways of working together.

There are other organisations we can work with too such as:

- *BCA* – in their 'new bush' and schools initiatives;
- *Church Army* – in their restoration, evangelism and training programs;
- *Soul Survivor* – especially their 'Soul in the Bush' program – with five such events to take place in our diocese over the next six months;
- *Fusion and Scripture Union* in their schools work;
- *ABM* and *CMS* with pilgrimages and other missional opportunities; and
- the *Alpha, Business Alpha, Youth Alpha* teams.

That's just a start; no doubt there are other opportunities for which we can work with other groups.

## **Pioneering**

In Canberra and Goulburn this is not a new concept. We've started a number of new churches and have shown boldness in exploring how all expressions of church should be mission shaped.

We are, to quote Archbishop Rowan Williams, living at a time when becoming a 'mixed-economy' church will be important.

A mixed economy church is one that endeavours to have every ministry shaped by mission.

Our existing parishes are front and centre. Their capacity to encourage Christians through word and sacrament is strong. Their ability to help newcomers discover Jesus and be nurtured in faith is vital.

But we live in a world where one size won't fit all. For all the wonderful diversity that exists in our parishes, there are many unchurched people who will never come to us and have the opportunity to discover the promise of new life through Jesus.

We need to find new ways to go out to them by developing fresh expressions of church that engage the many unchurched people who live in a changing culture.

My hope is that we can significantly increase the number of opportunities for people to serve across a range of ministry areas including:

- chaplains to shopping centres, airports, sporting teams, race tracks, the parliament, the business community and clubbers;
- tent makers and evangelists working with rural poor and socially disadvantaged;
- ministry by teens to teens;
- ministry by gen X-ers to gen X-ers;
- people in retirement living starting fresh expressions right where they are;
- Ethno-specific ministry and disabilities ministries (already begun under Archdeacon Anne);
- those who can use liturgy and symbol in order to reach people who are, or see themselves, apart from God in Christ; and
- new missional communities that live according to a rule (such as the Order of Mission).

My hope is that we will find ways to celebrate not only a range of styles and traditions but models of ministry too, after all, we are committed, each one, to serving the other.

To make this hope a reality, we'll need 'pathways' style training and one-on-one coaching, I believe.

We may need Ordinance and other structural change (such as cooperating parishes that allow for new styles of team ministry) and I've raised these matters with our Chancellor.

In addition, it will also be necessary to build ‘capacity’ at Jamieson House. The Registrar, Tracey Matthews and her team have been brilliant in their support of my ministry to this point in time as have my colleagues Bev Forbes and Wayne Brighton. Greater capacity here should aim to take some of the burden from you in the parishes, after all there are many things we can do better together than by ourselves in isolation.

## **Conclusion**

That’s a lot of ground in a short period of time and there are issues that I have not addressed in this charge: the problem of affluence after the global financial crisis; the reality of climate change in a diocese that’s already feeling the brunt of a drought that shows no sign of ending; the possibility of yet another painful bush fire season.

Comment about life in the Anglican Communion and our church nationally, particularly with respect to the covenant that was tabled earlier this year in Jamaica at the Anglican Consultative Council, is no doubt warranted.

These are all important considerations and I hope to make informed statements and responses in the course of the next six to twelve months.

As Bishop Trevor observed in his address, people are apt to overestimate what might be achieved in the short-term and then tend to underestimate what might be realised over time.

That is why much of what I’ve described will come to pass, please God, within a ten year frame. My hope is that as we follow God and seek the best for others, we will grow into the kinds of things I outlined to you.

It is my desire that by next session of Synod, we will have the opportunity to discuss what I’ve been referring to as a ‘20/20 Vision’: a revised diocesan mission plan taking us from the year 2010 to the year 2020.

Talk of big plans can be exhausting. My hope is that it will be life-giving and liberating.

Like 20:20 vision, I pray it will free us to recognise the opportunities that lie immediately before us all. I hope it will provide us with flexibility to help us address a future that is guaranteed to bring yet more change.

Ten years is a long time. Of immediate interest is the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Diocese in 2013. It is also the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Canberra's founding. I'll be asking that we mark these celebrations with a range of achievable missional goals.

Of course, all that we are able to achieve and hope for in the future is only possible by what has happened in the past.

At this point I wish to publicly thank my colleague Bishop Allan Ewing for his friendship, support and keen sense of humour (something I'm learning is fairly essential if one is to survive as a Bishop). Bishop Allan has been a loyal and much loved labourer in this Diocese for 25 years.

Many have greeted his resignation with much sadness. I am deeply grateful to Allan for his passion and talents which see him turning a new page in his ministry. Bishop Allan will continue with a range of ministry assignments until the end of December though his prime focus will be on his doctoral studies.

Will you please join me in thanking Bishop Allan and Tricia for their walk of faith among us?

Our task, it seems to me, is to cooperate with what God is already doing in our midst. We need to have eyes that see and hearts that are open to the direction and call of the Holy Spirit. As those who 'have an undying love for Lord Jesus Christ' (Ephesians 6:24) we also need to be ready to entrust ourselves, our diocese, and our future to Him who has already begun a good work in us; who will indeed bring it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart P. Robinson", is written on a light-colored background. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

The Right Reverend Stuart P Robinson  
Canberra and Goulburn  
19 September 2009