

THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S GRACE

We know so little about the head and face of Jesus. We know that he set his face to go to Jerusalem; we know that a woman poured expensive ointment on his head as a preparation for burial; we know that there were occasions when tears wet his face; we know that in the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed with his face to the ground in great anguish; we know that Judas gave the kiss of betrayal on the face of Jesus; we know that an official illegally struck him on the face during his interrogation before the High Priest; we know that he turned his face and looked straight at Peter in the midst of his betrayal, and Peter went outside and wept; we know that the priests and false witnesses spat in his face, and then, as though they could not bear his gaze, they blindfolded him and struck him with their fists and slapped him on the face; we know that the soldiers crowned his head with the thorns of mockery and then also spat on him and hit him over the head many times; we know that he was crucified at a place called 'the skull' and that over his head was the ironic sign, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews'; we know that he saw his mother, and spoke to her; we know that he who had so often spoken the word of God still ministered to his mother and to the repentant thief at his side even to the end.

And what of his hands? His hands are mentioned in the gospel stories. These were the hands that did mighty works; these were the hands that touched the leper in compassion; these were the hands whose fingers went into the ear of the deaf man; these were the hands which healed the blind man; these were the hands that touched the funeral bier and brought a widow's son back to life; these were the hands which blessed the children; these were the hands that tied an apron around his waist and then washed the grubby feet of his companions; these were the hands that took bread and broke it and gave it to his disciples; his hand, and the hand of his betrayer were together on the same table and in the same bowl of food; these were the hands that they bound together during his journey to death, as though he might escape them still; Pontius Pilate washed his hands, but the kindly hands of Jesus were torn open and tortured when he was pinned to the cross.

We know nothing of his body, except that it was flesh and blood like ours and so was vulnerable to exquisite pain. Roman soldiers knew all about how to deliver that pain, physical and emotional. The prophet Isaiah says that, 'he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him'; he slept and ate and talked like the rest of us; but the feet that had walked over Israel's land to bring the gospel were pierced by nails; his body was clothed and unclothed and then clothed and unclothed again in mockery and contempt; he was scourged; he was set on high and left to asphyxiate by slow degrees; his modesty was exposed; he died; his side was pierced by a spear; his body was taken down and buried.

Had you been there you would have seen all this. We are not dealing here with a fable, but with a true man, a man with hands and feet and a body and ligaments and teeth and nerve-endings and a head and a face and a mother, and with real events. I want us to notice his head and his face and his body and his hands and his feet, to underline the reality of who and what we are dealing with. These are not old tales intended to give us consolation in the face of trouble: Christianity is not a philosophy of life. If the cross really is an event in history, and if at the cross we see both the singular death of a singular man, and also the crucifixion of the Son of God, then this singular event is history's culminating moment, and everything before and since has to be judged in relation to it. Is this what we did to the Son of God? Then that changes everything for ever.

'See from his head, his hands and feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down': He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Sorrow because this is where the sins of the world had brought the sinless Son of God. Of course, the sins of the wicked men who had engineered his destruction; of course the betrayal of his friends and the insults of his enemies; but more, much more than this. These were the sins of which we are all guilty; but he suffered, says the Bible 'for the sins of the whole world' (1 John 2:2). The judicial verdict under which he was put to death arose from his own choice and that of his Father, that he should suffer the curse of such a death for the sins of such a world. No wonder there was darkness over the whole land for three hours while the Prince of glory died.

And how love? How did love flow mingled down? The pain of his body is not the focus of the New Testament account, as he was 'wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities'. He drank a bitter cup prepared by his own Father. He knew the human race to be lost; he knew that we could not survive the judgment of God; he knew that we are outcasts and aliens, without God and without hope. Israel was like that: how much more the Gentiles. Confronted with the crowds, out of compassion, he warned them of the coming kingdom of God and the absolute need of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Ultimately it was his overwhelming love for the lost which brought him to the cross and made him willing to endure the curse of the cross for our salvation.

Now stand by the cross and look at the Saviour. You are in his heart. Recognise that if he died in such a way, it is because of your sin and mine. Recognise that we are dealing here with the death of the Lord of glory; that for him to do this, the need would have to be of momentous significance, that there is no other way for you to be recovered, redeemed, restored.

Recognise the utter futility, then, of attempting to save yourself. If that way had been open, the Saviour need not have died. Recognise, too, the reality of judgement and hell. It was Christ himself who taught more about this than anyone else: 'every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire', he said of the false prophets. Recognise then the great truth of the gospel, that, sinner as you are, totally unworthy as you are, God loves you and Christ died to save you from the coming wrath. Recognise, then that you owe everything to him and that he is your Lord and Master.

Now stand by the cross and look out at the world. Everywhere there are those who do not know about Jesus, and do not realise that faith in Jesus is the way of salvation. The lost remain in multitudes; they do not have the direction of God in their lives; they do not have relationship with the living God through Jesus; they do not have the joy of sins forgiven; they do not have the Holy Spirit binding them to God and to his people; they do not have eternal life. To bring these blessings into the world, God was prepared to give his only Son. For us, that reveals once and for all how miserable is the fate of the lost. Whatever the needs of people, social, physical, emotional, relational, none compares with their need to know Christ and be saved from the wrath to come. In the unambiguous words of the New Testament, 'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him' (John 3:36).

This exposes a crucial divide in the churches. Many in the church now believe that salvation comes to all automatically, without exception and without need for faith in Jesus. They may say that they believe in hell, but it is empty. I can only respond that they do not understand the cross of Christ and its absolutely central significance for the history of the world and the redemption of sinners. Nor do they understand the witness of the Bible to the sinfulness of our race, and the hopelessness of our saving panaceas, religious or secular. Paradoxically it is also impossible to comprehend the love of God, for the death of Jesus is emptied of its power to save. Not surprisingly, in much modern Christianity, there is a lack of focus on the cross.

We have reached this day a moment of decision for us as a Diocese, as a community of Anglican Christians: to help us make the decision, I believe we are going to need above all the perspective of the cross. At the Synod last year I explained the Mission Statement and goal that had been commended to us by the Diocesan Executive Board and the Standing Committee. I warned members that the call to mission is 'a call for sacrifice, for change, for unremitting effort, in dependence on God's Spirit... If we are going to take the challenge of this mission statement seriously, we must be ready to commit ourselves to it by this time next year'. I went on to say this: 'In effect, it gives us the next year to analyse, to consult, to plan, to pray before we come back to Synod and decide not merely on the budget, but on the mission. I am proposing that at the Synod in 2002 we deliberate on both these connected issues. October 2002 is when we decide to enter the race and respond to the starter's gun - or we decide that this is not the race we want to enter.'

Now return to the perspective of the cross. What does it have to say to us in this moment of decision? At one stage we see the Apostle Paul defending and explaining his ministry against critics. In doing so he comes to exactly the same place as we have reached. He is aware of the judgement day, and his own accountability to the Lord on that day. 'Knowing the fear of the Lord,' he says, 'we persuade others.' But he goes further: 'For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised' (2 Corinthians 5: 11, 14-15). It is for this reason that he is an ambassador of Christ, exercising the ministry of reconciliation and calling men and women everywhere to faith in Christ.

The Apostle is controlled by the love of Christ, specifically the love that Christ has for him as demonstrated by the death of the Saviour on the cross. I am saying to you that if the cross of Christ has the central place in our own lives, we too will be controlled by the love of Christ, and we too will give ourselves pre-eminently to the task of doing all we can to see that men and women are reconciled to God through Christ. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. We will understand the need of the lost to be found, and we will have before us, indeed within us, the overpowering motive that we need to give ourselves to the Mission of evangelism. I am saying that we need to meditate on the cross, to grasp its significance, to be moved by its transforming power in ourselves, and so to reach out to others who also need to be saved from the wrath to come. If Christ has so loved us, how can we not so love others?

But the cross is not only the motive for sharing the gospel – it is the measure of the lengths to which we need to go in mission. On this theme, Jesus himself said: 'unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me...' (John 12:24-26). In thinking of this Mission we should be under no illusions; it will be a difficult, demanding and daunting undertaking, as all mission is. We would be better not to begin if we do not intend to finish. After all, however, we serve one who, for the sake of the joy that lay before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of God.

Are we ready for this as a Diocese, an Anglican community? In one sense we have always been engaged in this very work. The issue is, are we willing to put it so explicitly in the forefront of our work together? Are we willing to make this a moment of fresh dedication to the task? I am not sure that we are. There are signs of tiredness; there are signs of complacency; there

are signs of worldliness. Furthermore, even if we may be willing to embrace the Mission, there will be no real future in it if the other members of our churches are not themselves moved with as much passion and compassion, so that they too believe in this from their hearts. If at the centre of your very being there is the profound recognition that the Son of God loved you and gave himself for you on the cross, you will be willing to count the world but loss, to give and to give and to give that others may be saved. In other words, it is only the deepest message of the gospel, blessed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is going to move our pastors and our people to mission. Any other motive – for example conformity with the prevailing Diocesan or parish ethos – will be futile and unworthy. Have we as yet considered all from the perspective of the cross? Are we willing to come to that point?

With this observation we come to another issue that we must grasp from the perspective of the cross: the connection between grace and repentance. First, grace. What we must say from the vantage point of the cross is this: that as far as this Mission is concerned, all is of grace between us. On the one hand there is the mission in which we must all be involved as obedient servants of Christ; I have no hesitation to calling you to that. On the other hand, there is the form of that Mission as presented to us for our joint consideration at this synod. I am confidently calling you to that as well. But I do not confuse them. Christ died to save you; I did not. It is to him that you are accountable, not to me. If you as an individual, you as a pastor responsible for a church, if you as a church, indeed if we as a Diocese, are not willing to embrace this Mission that we are discussing, all remains well between us. We are not saved by good works, even the good work of mission, and certainly not the good work of this Mission. We are a fellowship of churches, not an army with an episcopal general, and you must feel free to choose your own path of obedience to Christ.

Secondly, however, there is repentance. In being saved through the cross we yield ourselves to Christ, to his lordship over our lives. This has very significant practical effects, of which one, as you know, is a commitment to his mission. It may not be this version of his mission; but I trust that whatever version of his mission you adopt, reckon on it being costly, and that you will not avoid this one because of the cost. We are to offer ourselves as 'living sacrifices' (Rom 12:1): this is repentance. I believe that one of the weaknesses of our church over the years has been what we used to call cheap grace, the presumption of forgiveness without the concrete reality of repentance. A church not shaped by the cross will not be a missionary church. Listen to the martyred Bishop James Hannington in 1885 as he boldly faced the King who was about to slay him: 'I open the way to Uganda with my blood'.

The course of this year past has been in many ways for me a costly joy. I told the Synod last year that I have no intention of acquiescing silently in the passing away of Anglican Christianity in this region, and that I would give myself to the task of this Mission with a whole heart. I have preached evangelistically whenever I have been given the opportunity, and I have been delighted at the real stirrings of evangelistic interest in numerous parishes. As I predicted, we abandoned the old name of Diocesan Executive Board and introduced the Mission Task Force, which has been meeting constantly and working hard all year. I have also been to every regional workers conference and consulted about the Mission, together with other Regional, Area Deanery and parish conferences. Twice the Bishops have been away together. On the first occasion we committed ourselves to each other and to the Mission. On the second occasion we discussed 'Becoming a Missionary Bishop'. As well, the Appropriations Ordinance has had to be prepared along new lines. This has required great effort from the finance group. You will hear more about that tomorrow night.

However, not all my efforts have been devoted to the Mission as such. Let me say that the single most significant thing which has diverted me from it has been the task of attending to issues of sexual abuse. But has it been a diversion from mission, or an integral part of it? This may well reflect one of the barriers to evangelism that we are going to find in the community, as our good name has been compromised. Our reputation cannot be restored by acting as though certain events never occurred. We are going to have to learn once more what it is to live by grace and thus to show repentance as a community. Indeed, there is a deep connection between the Mission and our response to this problem. The Diocese as a whole has a good reputation for care with integrity in churches, schools, welfare work, retirement villages. But shameful cases of abuse of trust do exist, and, as we look back at our history we see that we have not always handled matters well. I do not claim to have responded adequately in all cases either, but I am seeking to be fair, to redress wrongs and to prevent recurrences.

Ministry is a character business; lose your character and, effectively, you lose your ministry. Of course there is grace and forgiveness for those who have erred; but part of the very business of coming to grips with what we have done is the recognition by our erring pastors or lay leaders that various forms of ministry are no longer an option. Sometimes this involves the loss of a position or a licence; sometimes the surrender or deprivation of orders. On the broader front of our own church's life, there is also need for public contrition and apology as well as an active care for victims. If the public recognition of our weaknesses brings our church into disrepute, it is still necessary to live the truth. It may be that we will all the more effectively witness to the grace of God by living under it ourselves: but this involves painful repentance, not easy grace.

Since the last synod the Mission Task Force has given concentrated attention to the subject of Mission strategy, and that has been a complex but exhilarating task. It is the proposed strategy which must engage our attention as a Synod today. Tonight

we will be asked to endorse the overall strategy and then to accept the Mission. The strategy has been hammered out over many meetings and has gone through all sorts of forms. Many of you will have seen it in various drafts and by your comments will have helped create its final form. I now turn to the task of introducing you to it.

STRATEGY FOR THE MISSION

The Mission Statement

Here is our Mission Statement.

“To glorify God by proclaiming our saviour the Lord Jesus Christ in prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, so that everyone will hear his call to repent, trust and serve Christ in love, and be established in the fellowship of his disciples while they await his return.”

Members of the Synod last year will have heard me offer an exposition of it, and I do not intend to repeat that material here. I discussed it frequently during the course of the year, and if I had my time over I think that I would change the wording slightly from ‘so that everyone will hear his call to repent...’, to ‘in order that everyone will hear his call to repent...’ In this way we avoid any suggestion that results will follow mechanically from our proclamation. For the technically minded, an unambiguous purpose clause is better theologically at this point than a result clause. But the fault is not an impossible one to live with, and, given how familiar the wording has become, I am not proposing a change.

As a synod we accepted the Mission Statement last year as the basis of our work for this year. I believe that it serves us well by clarifying our priorities and creating the dynamic for our actions. It tells us that just as faith precedes works, so the proclamation of the gospel, blessed by the Spirit of God, is the way in which men and women are saved, liberated for works of love and incorporated into the fellowship of Christ’s people. It has proved a fruitful way of talking about ourselves and our tasks. It has been set to music four times so far, with varying degrees of success! I continue to commend it to you warmly.

The 10% Goal

Much of the discussion this year has centred on the 10% goal. Let me state it in its final form, and then discuss it: To see 10% of the population of the region of the Diocese in Bible-believing churches in 10 years.

The vision is more important than the goal, and yet without the goal the vision is like a soothing Saturday morning sleep-in: pleasant but unproductive. A goal needs a component of awkward arithmetic to get us out of bed. It brings the mission to life and forces us to take it seriously. In fact, already it has had a galvanic effect. However, we must understand its function. It is not the motive for mission (which is the love of Christ), nor the power of mission (which remains the Holy Spirit), nor the foundation of mission, (which is the electing purposes of God). It is an instrument of mission. Even the strongest doctrine of God’s sovereignty incorporates human effort, including human planning into the divine work, and the goal is an element of that planning. If it is legitimate for a missionary to survey carefully a new mission field and to plan a careful mission strategy, I believe that it is thoroughly legitimate for us to put our goal like this. I think that our friends in Sabah and Nigeria take aim before they start evangelising.

What do we mean by 10%? According to our researchers, our Diocese contains about four million people, and is growing fast. As far as we can tell, on any given Sunday there would be about 60,000 people of all ages in Anglican churches. This is about 1.5% of the population. There may perhaps be another 20,000 people who are members but attend irregularly. Our research is still rudimentary, since we have not been asking the right questions, and have no agreed method of counting. Furthermore, there are the interesting questions of what we mean by ‘Bible-believing’ and ‘churches’. If for the sake of argument, however, we are relatively generous and arrive at a figure of 100,000 (2.5%), we are still 300,000 short of where the goal calls us to be. One of the best ways of bringing this home is to think of the numbers in your parish, to think of what the figure 10% may mean, and then to ask how many may be attending Bible-believing churches.

I have suggested that we use the phrase ‘Bible-believing’ for this reason: so that we may have inclusion without confusion. There are all sorts of churches which will want to be involved with this Mission. Some Anglican churches may not wish to be called ‘evangelical’ because it suggests to them a party name; others may not be Anglican, belonging to another denomination or to none at all. I am suggesting that we be as inclusive as possible with those who accept this self-description gladly. Our inclusiveness suggests co-operation in mission and a willingness to see that others besides Anglicans are doing the work of the gospel. It may well mean a willingness to help other churches including ethnic ones, without thinking that they will necessarily become Anglican churches. It may even be that we will see new, more genuinely Australian forms of Anglicanism emerge!

But I do not endorse theological confusion or laxity. 'Bible-believing' is a qualitative assessment as well as a collaborative one. By 'Bible-believing' I have in mind in particular the churches which owe their theological structure to the Reformation, and who thus see their fundamental authority in the great 'scripture alone' of the Reformation. They give scripture the priority over the traditions of the church and the findings of human experience whether rationalistic or spiritualising. From the scriptures they preach a gospel that is shaped by salvation through Christ alone, by faith alone, through grace alone, to the glory of God alone. This is the Reformation understanding of the gospel. As I indicated last year, in inviting collaboration within classical Christian orthodoxy, I believe that this gospel itself is at stake in some of the disputes we have with our fellow Christians, and we cannot, even for the sake of mission, allow inclusion to become confusion. 'Bible-believing' is not an invitation to theological and pastoral irresponsibility.

There are three chief reasons why we should embrace this 10% goal. First, it is humanly speaking impossible. Our society is still moving in other directions than towards Christianity. The very audacity of the 10% goal reminds us that is beyond our strength, and hence it does not constitute a brainless challenge simply to gain market share. To those who are concerned lest it become a sort of obsession at the expense of our true teaching about God's sovereignty, I say that it is preeminently a reminder that prayer is integral to our mission as we depend upon the living God. It may be, in fact, that it is God's present intention to leave hard hearts in their unbelieving state, and for the gospel preaching to have that condemnatory role which it has sometimes played in the past. But that is God's part; for our part we will plan, with trust that he will use our plans in his sovereign purposes.

Second, we should embrace the 10% because of our vision that everyone may hear about Christ's call to repent. At the moment, even if 2.5% of people are attending Bible-believing churches as defined above, the chances of knowing such a Christian are small. By seeking 10% we are attempting the first stage of our vision of reaching all with the gospel. Ten percent of the population is so significant that it gives a good base for the gospel to grow through relationships, as friends and families bring their unsaved associates to church. It is not as though 10% is the end goal; what talk of this percentage does is to awaken us with a jolt to the enormity of the task which we have been attempting to undertake all along. So also the reference to 10 years. In one sense this is less significant than the 10%. We would be glad to see such a goal reached in 2 years or 20 years. But if we do not speak of a decade, we will lose our sense of urgency and become complacent.

Third, we should embrace the 10% because of its power to stir our imaginations. For a long time we have been content to go quietly on, presuming that the real work of reaching the world must be occurring elsewhere. Certainly we have seen growth in our churches overall, for which we thank God. But even such growth fools us about the real impact we have been having for Christ in our community. As a result we have not engaged in concentrated attention to our mission and to the requirements of it. In fact we have even been critical of those who have attempted to do new things and to suggest ways of growing the gospel.

I want to say that, under God, we are very well poised for a break-out. On the whole we have not succumbed to worldly ways of thought about religion. On the contrary, our churches are famously marked by such good things as strong theological orthodoxy, expository preaching and a very well-trained and committed laity. Without such wonderful advantages we could not even be contemplating the initiatives raised by the goal. Certainly, whatever happens, we must retain them. But equally, precisely because we have such advantages, we have a tremendous God-given obligation to use them. You cannot guard the gospel by hiding it in the ground; what you do not use, you will lose.

We have now reached a critical moment in our history. We have all the advantages that an Anglican background gives us. Part of that good inheritance is our stable theological position, our recognised place in this community, and the human and financial resources of our Diocese. But we have reached a point when the Anglican church must become a native Australian or it will pass from the scene. And we have reached it at a time when the mood of this Diocese - by which I mean the Anglican community including me as your Archbishop - is ready for experiment, risk, initiative, failure and success - as long as it is utterly shaped by the great principles of love, of the kingdom of God and hence of the death of Christ for us. Our history is of huge positive significance; but our history can constitute a dead hand of restriction as well. I do not believe that our mild laws are the cause of our paralysis; I think that they are sometimes used as an excuse. Let us change and repeal them if they stand in the way. But let us use every gift of imagination, every effort of our heart, every new tool to reach the lost of this great Diocese for Christ. Let me tell you that the 10% goal has already begun to open eyes and stir hearts. I hope that we do not contemplate modifying it.

The Strategy of the Diocese

What of the strategy of the Diocese as a whole, that is of the Anglican community living in our region? It contains first a fundamental aim and then a fourfold policy which says how the aim will be put into effect. In each separate part of the life of our community, this strategy will need to be translated into practical tactics, or local strategies. Hence we need to make this as flexible as possible, so as to activate without restricting the initiatives which should be planned and taken at all levels of our Diocesan life. We are looking for real, concrete proposals, ones that will require effort and which will work. To illustrate: The

Bishops and I have worked out ten key initiatives in which we will engage, flowing directly from this strategy. They will not be the same as a parish initiative or the initiative of one of our great organisations: you will need to work on your own strategies. But this fundamental strategic document will help the whole community to co-operate in the work we are undertaking together. Actually the strategies have already proved their worth. They have been basic to working out the proposed Income and Expenditure Ordinance. They have shaped the Ordinance and so proved their value in strategic planning.

The Fundamental Aim

To multiply Bible-based Christian fellowships, congregations and churches which nurture their members and expand themselves, both in the Diocese and 'in all the world'.

A fundamental aim has to exclude other possibilities. There are other strategies which we could adopt in order to reach our goal and fulfil the vision. We could run large crusades; we could all engage in door to door evangelism; we could decide to sell off a hundred small churches and create thirty or so large regional churches. Some such suggestions could certainly still be followed; there is nothing against crusades or having big churches. But the fundamental aim is to multiply churches, to have lots of churches.

Please note the qualitative words: Bible-based, Christian, nurturing, expanding. All are highly significant. I trust that those involved in the Mission will give careful attention to each one. Presumably the method of multiplying churches will usually be that the expanding church will seek the right moment to divide and start afresh.

Please also note the descriptor words: fellowship, congregation, church. I am not intending to use these in a strictly theological sense. The theological point is that all are capable of yielding the experience of church, of meeting Jesus Christ in his word and by his Spirit in the company of our fellow-believers. In this context, the aim is to remind us that the church experience in today's world may be quite varied in size, circumstances and context and to enable us to embrace flexibility. A fellowship may be a proto-congregation, and a congregation part of a church, sociologically; doubtless it will be good for those who enter the faith through a 'fellowship' to come eventually to membership of a 'church'. But if we are to penetrate society, if we are to build the sort of bridges which unbelievers will be able to traverse, the informal fellowship may well be both the starting point and the finishing point and we ought not to regard it as essentially less than church.

Please note the boundary words: in the Diocese and in all the world. The significance is that there is no boundary to our concern for the lost. Our vision rightly speaks of everyone, and our concerns as Christians must involve the world. We cannot afford as a Diocese to lose our grip on world mission, just because we are engaged in our own local one.

The gist of the matter is this: here is a challenge to us all. What will this strategy demand of you? Where can we follow the natural relational lines of our community in order to set up fellowships? Can we say that every street will have a bible study group, every retirement village will have one, every large firm will have its Christian meeting, that professions will foster groups: the nurses, the police, the lawyers; that we will have groups in schools, universities and TAFEs? That we will aim to have as many congregations as there are primary schools in our area? That we will not neglect the other cultures and language groups which have settled here? Can these fellowships lead into congregations and into churches? Will we provide Christian ministry and nurture to the whole community as far as we are able?

And those questions lead to the fourfold policy.

The Fourfold Policy

The four parts of this policy are interlocking. They constitute the really major things which we must attend to. Each will generate many other initiatives and policies. Thus, for example, we have used these policies to give shape to the Appropriations Ordinance. This has enabled us to present the strategy-driven budget that you asked for last year. It has forced us to ask the question: what is our priority? Given that there are so many attractive claimants on this money, how can we best distribute it? I will say a little about each one in turn.

I. Spiritual Renewal

From the very beginning we have all been aware of the need for prayer and for the Spirit of God to bless our efforts. It would be futile and dangerous for us to involve ourselves in this enterprise without attending to the spiritual issues involved. Whatever we do, we must not engage in a mechanical, programmatic or activist Mission heedless of the spiritual challenge we are taking on.

Sometimes I have been asked about revival. Is this what we are looking for? There have been great awakenings of the church with evangelistic blessing in the history of God's people. I do not believe that God has covenanted himself to produce such events, although they may occur, and he may so bless us. But there are dangers of thinking in terms of revival. I doubt that it is a biblical theme as such. The word itself has been so abused by being associated with showmanship that it is almost unusable. It is hard to theologize about it without falling into the trap of thinking that the initiative lies with us rather than with God. Furthermore, paradoxically, it may so emphasize prayer that evangelistic mission itself may be undervalued.

If we want to honour God's sovereignty and initiative, we must start explicitly with his word. That is why we begin the fourfold policy with this statement: 'In submission to the Lord Jesus Christ and his command to make disciples of all nations...' Of course the word of God contains many commands and injunctions; but I believe that it is this word which has moved us at this time in a special way, given the needs of the society around us. It is not - it cannot be - a new word, but it has come to us with new force.

The policy that results focuses not on the world, but on the Christians. Renewal, if that is the right word, starts with faith in God's word. The gospel received by faith is the mother of obedience. Hence our first duty is to call upon God for an outpouring of his Spirit on us. Furthermore we are asking for the Spirit to do his typical work, namely to assure the believers, through God's word, of their acceptance by God. It is by the Spirit that the word of God comes alive in our inner experience and we begin to call Christ Lord and God our Father. The Spirit does this by drawing our hearts to the love of God manifested in Christ and in particular the death of Christ on our behalf on the cross.

The assurance of the love of God for us as individuals is called 'faith', and such faith is the root of our response to God. A response which includes the idea of merit as commending us to God, enslaves us in good works done for the wrong motive. Likewise, a response which is mere activism, without trust in God is enslaving. True faith which rests entirely on the death of Christ for salvation empowers us and liberates us to do good for the right reason, to 'seek to please the Saviour in all things, manifest the godly life and be filled with prayerful and sacrificial compassion for the lost in all the world.' We are undoubtedly looking for a great outpouring of prayer for unbelievers; it will only come from a fresh appreciation of how Christ has loved us: once more, grace and repentance.

What then must we do? Only what we should always have been doing in any case: preach the gospel, praying earnestly for the outpouring of God's Spirit on the listeners. Pray for the believers, that we may be assured afresh of the love of God and filled with prayerful and sacrificial compassion for the lost; pray for unbelievers that they will come to know that same God through Christ. Lack of assurance founded on the word of the cross is one of our chief problems. The truth lies in the old, old story of Jesus and his love. You can tell Holy Spirit religion when you see people so come alive to the old, old story that they cannot wait to live for others and share it with others. You will recognise it when we cannot wait to pray for those who do not yet know God.

Do we need such a renewal of ourselves? After all we have been preaching this gospel over many years. This is so, and we should thank God for it. But if we had been all that this policy holds before us, we would have been a far different church, we could have had a far greater and more prayerful compassion for the lost, and we would have sacrificed so much more for the sake of the gospel. There is not much point in praying for the nation to repent, if we will not change ourselves first. When we see an abundance of godliness, prayer and compassion, we will know that the Holy Spirit has visited us and that Jesus Christ and him crucified is being taught and believed amongst us. This policy points to the specific word of God itself to challenge us to pray that God will unmistakably do his gospel work among us, so that there may be a great evangelistic move forward. Should we fail here, we fail everywhere. You may have realized now why I began this address with the cross of Christ.

2. Multiplying fellowships

It is part of the genius of this Diocese that it sees itself as being centered on the parish church, not on the Bishop or the overall institution. We believe that the local church is where the true action is, and that the institution exists to serve the local churches.

If we translate that into the Mission, what we say is that the local church is where the Mission will preeminently take place. It is true that the Bishops and the organizations will be active and indeed zealous for the Mission; it is true that some of the impetus and drive will come from that quarter. But if the local church waits for the leadership and resourcing of the so-called central bodies it will have failed in its own mandate. It is the local church which knows its area best and will know best what needs to be done; it is the local Christians who are going to have to be trained and inspired. Our Mission is local, not central.

Where to begin? When to begin? Why not begin at once with an audit? Why would people want to come to your church? Is it welcoming? Are the facilities in really good order? Are regulars willing to invite friends to come? Why or why not? Why do some keen people only come occasionally? If all the committed Christians came every week we would already increase our numbers very significantly. What is the preaching like? Pastors, why don't we commit ourselves to really improving our

preaching? It would also be a great thing if we stopped our grumbling and complaining about our preachers and started praying for them instead. Asked for the secret of his success as a preacher, C H Spurgeon said: 'My people pray for me'. There are things to do here that any church could and should do at once. May I suggest that we all conduct a serious audit before Christmas this year - and make the necessary changes.

Furthermore the major strategy being suggested for the local church here is church, congregational and fellowship multiplication. For some, it may involve simply starting a new Sunday congregation as the first step; for others it will be the intentional multiplication and division of cell groups; for others it may be the setting up of a new congregation in a nearby suburb as yet untouched for Christ. In other words, engage in purposeful church planting. All this, of course, has major implications for buildings and architecture which are going to have to be worked through. It is also likely to be messy. Neat and tidy minds (like mine) will not be happy. We are talking initiative, risk, failure, change, success. But we are talking of a shift from 'can't do' to 'can do'.

The parish church cannot accomplish all this, and not all parish churches will want to do anything. Most obviously we have to recognise (at long last) that a city like Wollongong or Sydney is not simply a one-dimensional geographical entity. It is a multi-layered conglomerate; the old parish system is never going to penetrate all its recesses. We are going to need whole sets of different churches and fellowships which follow the relational and professional and recreational lines of the city and lodge within them. The parish churches will undoubtedly provide the resources for such developments; but they cannot reach their surrounds unless they invent, sustain, allow and encourage such initiatives. If they cannot do this, perhaps others can. Missions involve missionaries. Our call may be to come over and help us, or it may be to respond ourselves to that call.

3. Multiplying Persons

The usual way chosen by God to share the gospel is through living agents of his truth. The multiplication of the churches is going to rest upon the multiplication of well trained messengers of the gospel. Among the many blessings of God in the course of our history has been the strong ethos in this Diocese of education and training. We have given almost unique attention to the education of the clergy and other Christian workers. In recent years this has been strengthened still further through bodies like CEFM and the Ministry Training Strategy. In their turn, the clergy have been trainers of the other Christians; they have rightly seen themselves as teachers, and in church after church they have engendered a love for the Bible and for expository preaching. You may see the fruitful consequence of this in the Katoomba Convention Movement, where thousands gather simply to hear the word of God explained and applied. Furthermore there has always been a strong ethos in our parishes and para-church movements to train Christians workers.

Contrary to the trends elsewhere in Australia, if not the Western World, we have unprecedented numbers of students entering Moore College, Mary Andrews College and the Sydney Missionary and Bible College. This movement is of tremendous significance. Without it we could hardly be contemplating the Mission of which we speak. I hope that it delights your heart. The excellent Dr Woodhouse, Principal of Moore Theological College, tells me that the College is likely to have over three hundred students next year; we are talking in terms of six hundred before long, and a thousand students as a possibility. It is absolutely imperative that we seize this moment. It will require as much support for the College as we can afford to give, but there is absolutely nothing which will be a better investment than this. I urge us as a Diocese to make it without the slightest hesitation. Give generously to the education of the next generation of young men and women: it will bear much fruit.

But this is only the beginning. The pastors and teachers so produced then have the task of training the rest of us. No matter how many graduates we have from the Colleges, they are not going to do the job of evangelizing and of nurturing the people of God. We are going to need large numbers of people trained to be the local leaders of the Mission. They will come in all shapes and sizes: ordained, lay, full time, part time, voluntary. They will be youth leaders, Bible study leaders, Sunday School teachers, Women's ministry leaders, hospital visitors - there will be no end to the opportunities. Without doubt, learning and teaching is going to be a major activity of this Diocese, starting at once and going on into the long-term future.

That is the inner story of my appointment of Narelle Jarrett as the next Archdeacon for women. She has gathered a team of women dedicated to the training and pastoral nurture of women, for if this Mission is going to flourish it will need to capture the hearts of thousands of Christian women and impel them into ministry. Once again let me remind us all that we are speaking here of our Mission to the whole world: we must expect that many of our gospel workers, men and women, will move out of Sydney into the wider world of need. We will have to export with generosity.

4. Reform

Over the years the Diocese has acquired patterns of tradition that are neither gospel-focussed nor even Anglican. We will need to reform.

Churches and denominations are notoriously resistant to change. Those under thirty who do not have the power want change and those over fifty who do have the power have reached the point where they don't want change. It takes an alliance between the thirty year olds and the eighty year olds to bring in the revolution!

Some things must not change. If we are to see a great inflow of new Christians into the churches, it is going to be all the more important that our doctrine is sound and strong. We must not encourage easy-believism by lowering our standards. There is nothing to be gained by turning church into entertainment and a congregation into an audience. Music must serve the gospel not be a substitute for it. There is nothing holy about change as such. But there is nothing holy about adherence to dead traditions which may themselves have been revolutionary two centuries ago.

In another sphere, I am glad to say that Rodney Dredge is working purposively with the Secretariat to improve the services that we offer the churches and the yield on our investments. You have already seen changes in this area impelled by the Mission; you will see more. We need to look at our Ordinances and to ask whether they hinder growth. In the next year we will ask our organisations to examine themselves to see whether they can serve the Mission better. In fact, they have begun to do this already. We have begun to put our property practices in order. I believe that we will need to look at matters as diverse as our patterns of ministry and our architectural regulations. One of the chief areas of development must be in the in-service training of clergy and other Christian workers. I am hoping that in the near future we will see a major change in this area. The Bishops and Archdeacons are already asking themselves how to promote mission in their regions.

I could go on, but the key point is this: we have reached a turning point in our Diocesan life. The Mission offers us a great opportunity to advance together in a focussed and yet flexible way, to serve the Kingdom, to build the churches and to grow the gospel. I commend it to you without reserve.

Now an explanation of what lies before us at this Synod. First, in a few moments we are going to turn to the Synod service. It has been scheduled right here after the Presidential address, so that we may respond to the challenge of this great subject that I have been speaking about. That is in line with the first policy, on spiritual renewal. We begin at once to grapple with this challenge. It is a solemn moment. We will hear God's word, sing his praises and call on him in prayer. I hope that at this time we will all give prayerful consideration to the Mission and what it may mean for our Anglican community. I hope that it will help prepare us for the rest of Synod and especially the discussion tonight.

Second, this evening we turn solemnly and deliberately to the Mission itself.

There will be four stages. Speakers will introduce the elements of the strategy document, the Vision Statement, the Goal, the Aim and the Fourfold Policy. Discussion will ensue and you will be invited as a Synod to endorse to amend or to reject each one. You must feel free to do so. Then we will vote on the document as a whole.

The Bishops have issued this call:

'In submission to the word of the Lord Jesus, the Archbishop and Bishops of the Diocese of Sydney have committed themselves in unity of heart and spirit to give example, energy and leadership to this Mission. They are doing so in fellowship with the Archdeacons, the Standing Committee and its Mission Task Force, and they invite the whole Anglican community in Sydney (together with other believers) to join them by taking the initiative to see that Christ is proclaimed to all people.'

At the end of the evening, if the Diocesan strategy document is endorsed, you will be invited to join the Bishops, Archdeacons, Standing Committee and Mission Task Force, by adding the words 'the Synod' in an appropriate place, and the word 'together', so that it reads 'and together they invite...' I am going to urge Synod members to sign this document individually, should you wish to do so, as a sign of your willingness to be involved. It will then become your personal invitation to the Anglicans of the Diocese (with other believers) to undertake the Mission. I believe that you will find this simple act a matter of great significance and enduring for you.

Should we accept this call to Mission tonight, it will, of course dominate the rest of the Synod, in various ways. We know already that the Appropriations Ordinance has been shaped by this strategy. But I am also proposing that we give considerable time to the joint discussion of the fourfold policy, in order to bring home its significance to the parish and organisational level. Time has been set aside for this at this Synod; it has been given precedence over much of the legislation which, be assured, can wait another year.

CONCLUSION

We know so little about the head and face of Jesus - except what they did to it when they put him to death. We know so little about his hands - except they pierced them with nails. We know so little about his body - except he was scourged and crucified. But we know that he bore our sins in his body on the tree; we know that he loved us and gave himself for us; we

know that it is in the face of Jesus that we come to a saving knowledge of God. We know the misery of unbelief: misery now, and misery in eternity to come. We know that our understanding of grace and love is shaped by him and what he did for us and that we owe him our very selves. Thus we sing: 'In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time; all the light of endless story gathers round its head sublime.'

And what is that to us? 'The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised' (2 Corinthians 5:14,15). I do not insist that you assent to the Diocesan Mission: you may properly judge it to be the wrong way of proceeding entirely. But I do ask you to think: Are you controlled by the grand fact that Christ loves you? That is, does the cross of Christ mean that to you? If it means anything, it must mean everything. Thus, do you live no longer for yourself, but for him who died and was raised? Then, will you give up your small ambitions, and in whatever way, with whatever gifts you have, join in the great task of persuading others to be reconciled to God?

IN THE DIOCESE

It is entirely appropriate that I should express my own appreciation, and I am sure of yours also as we give praise and thanks to God for the faithful ministry over many years, of those who have retired from full time ministry, and those who have died.

The retirees were: the Rev Canon David Claydon, Federal Secretary of the Church Missionary Society; the Rev Peter H Mitchell, Rector of Port Kembla; the Rev Lay-Kum Ho, Chaplain at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital; the Rev Colin G F Berriman, Chaplain at Westmead Hospital; the Rev Alan E Hamilton, Rector of St Marys; the Rev D W (Bill) Holland, Curate-in-Charge of Annandale; the Rev John H Cashman, Rector of St Mary's Balmain; the Rev John R Henderson, Chaplain at Greenwich Hospital, Graythwaite Nursing Home and Senior Chaplain for Hope Healthcare; the Rev Don K Wilson, Rector of Padstow; the Rev Richard L Andrew, Rector of St Paul's Wahroonga; the Rev David H White, Rector of Blackheath; the Rev John E Hawkins, Chaplain at St Vincent's Hospital; the Rev John W Woo OAM, Curate-in-Charge of St Andrew's Strathfield and the Rev John R Seddon, Rector of St Luke's Mosman.

Those who died were: the Rev Geoff B Simmons; the Rev Norman M Gelding; the Rev Canon P Austin Day OAM; the Rev Dr Douglas C Abbott OAM; the Rev Canon Boyce R Horsley; the Rev Walter G Coller; the Rev Ron L Coleman; the Rev Ken B Roughley; the Rev Len J Ford; the Rev Canon Lawrie F Bartlett OAM; the Rev Pauline J McCann and the Rev Canon Reg W Hanlon. I am sure you join me in both thanking God, and also expressing sympathy to their families and loved ones, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, believing that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Peter F Jensen
Archbishop