

BISHOP'S REPORT TO SYNOD 2011

This year Dr Patricia Brennan died after a long battle with cancer. Patricia was an Anglican parishioner in the Diocese of Sydney who from the late seventies agitated for the full inclusion of women in the life, mission and ministry of our Church. She came to prominence in the eighties when the Movement for the Ordination of Women was arguing strongly in the public arena for women to be ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood. She was herself a staunch lay person, but believed that the mercy, love and justice of the Gospel message required that men and women should be able to explore all opportunities for Mission and Ministry in the Church today. I never met Patricia, although her face was familiar to me from the television and I always enjoyed her somewhat strident opinions. As I read the report of her funeral, I recalled a passage that she often quoted when she spoke publicly: "We are the ones we have been waiting for".

Dr Brennan was calling the Church to recognize that we are responsible for the way Mission and Ministry is shaped in our time and our place. We are subject to the sovereign will of God. We engage in all our work as Church under the authority of the Holy Scriptures. We test every decision we make according to conscience. We look to the experience of those faithful Christians who have gone before us to help us in decision making. But we cannot avoid the responsibilities of being the Christ bearers in our own time. It is always easier to wait for someone else to take responsibility. Dr Brennan's oft repeated quote is a poignant reminder that unless we take our Mission and Ministry seriously, we can hardly expect to be effective agents of the Gospel in our time and in our place. We are the ones we have been waiting for.

Of course she was speaking in the context of the Ordination of Women, but what she had to say has a wide application. I think there is a general malaise in the western world that we are waiting for someone else to take responsibility. After all, it is always easier to complain about politicians, to criticize international super powers or to feel as if we are innocent victims of the machinations of people far away and far more powerful than we are. The reality is that we are gifted by God to take responsibility for our own lives, to take responsibility for exercising Mission and Ministry in our time and our place. St Paul puts it very clearly in the second epistle to the Corinthians, Chapter 6: *As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, "At an acceptable time I have listened to you, on the day of salvation I have helped you." See now is the acceptable time; see now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's*

way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way. Paul knew that those early disciples needed to be encouraged to take responsibility for the mission of Christ and not to wait for someone else to do that. Paul himself lived that out in his own life and this text, sometimes caricatured as Paul's boasting, is in fact, a text where we see clearly how committed Paul was to the urgency of the task of being responsible for sharing the Gospel in his time and in his place by putting his life on the line again, and again. This is the context in which we seek, in our time and in our place, to be faithful disciples and apostles of Jesus Christ. We do not need to wait for someone else – for a more visionary bishop, for a better priest, for more effective lay leaders, for younger people, for more wise people, for more children, the task is before us now, it is immediate and it is ours. We are the people we have been waiting for. While this may seem to be a huge burden, it can also be interpreted as a wonderful statement of freedom and hope. How blessed we are to be called to Mission and Ministry now, in May 2011 in the Diocese of Willochra!

I am delighted that we have with us at this Synod, the Reverend John Deane, the Executive Director of the Anglican Board of Mission and he will challenge us with the need for us to participate in God's mission overseas and amongst Indigenous Australians. This is just one aspect of the mission that we are all involved in, we are all called to as we respond to God's love reaching out towards us. How much easier it would be if we could wait for someone else to do this work, but now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation.

The 'call' stories of the great Old Testament prophets remind us that no matter how poor our self image might be, how unprepared we might be, how unwilling we might be, when God calls us to act, there is only one response, "Here I am, send me". The Blessed Virgin Mary gives us another wonderful example of faithful humility. She understood at some deep level that "we are the ones we have been waiting for" and so she gave herself completely to God's purposes – "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word". [Luke 1:38]

THE DIOCESE

Camp Willochra

Brett Seymour-Murray was appointed as Warden in August 2010, following the resignation of Graham Woolford. He has settled in well and works well with

the Committee, the Diocesan Office and of course, with those who use the camp. On 25th June 2011 there will be a celebratory Eucharist followed by a barbeque at Camp Willochra to celebrate 50 years since the opening of our wonderful Diocesan Centre just north of Melrose. The current chair of the Camp Willochra Committee, **Mr Maurice Penn and his wife, Bev**, have been assembling historical photographs over the last few months and it is amazing to see what an important role the campsite has played in the life of our Diocese. The original site was just a bare piece of farming land, generously gifted by the Bishop family, and with the assistance of friends from the Diocese of North West Texas and a generous donation from the Bannon family, the site was transformed into a fairly basic campsite. The careful husbandry over succeeding years has given us a facility which, while it is not 'five star', is certainly well equipped for its task. I do hope that you will be present, if you are able, to celebrate this Golden Jubilee. Bishop Tom Jones' vision of creating a Diocesan Centre has certainly been fulfilled and there is much to give thanks for as we look to the future life of Camp Willochra.

Anniversaries

There have been some significant anniversaries during the last twelve months.

On 25th July, 2010 over a hundred people gathered at the little Church of St Matthew, Sheringa, to mark 100 years of worship there. Guests came from all over Australia as well as from the UK and Canada for the celebration. The tiny congregation was elated, and it was a wonderful encouragement for all our little isolated churches. When I became bishop, there was a strong push to close the Church. Its restoration and continuing use is a clear statement about the importance of worship in the lives of the local community. Sometimes small is very beautiful.

Over the first weekend in November the people of Cowell and the surrounding districts gathered to celebrate a century of worship at St Hugh's and 125 years of Anglican ministry in the District. A highlight of the celebrations was a bus trip to visit the many sites where Anglican worship has been conducted in the surrounding farming communities. The National Director and newly appointed Regional Director of BCA were able to be present for the weekend, honouring the important BCA connections with that congregation.

On Palm Sunday this year, our newest church building, the Roxby Downs Community Church, held its tenth birthday. The weekend was packed with events and guests included former clergy and representatives from the UCA. The Rev'd Ian McGrath, who was the Parish Minister at the time of the

building, was very relieved to find it still standing, and full of a lively worshipping community.

As I reminded Synod last year, 2015 marks the centenary of the Diocese of Willochra. After discussions with the Diocesan Council, I invited Mrs Dorothy Thorpe to chair the centenary celebrations planning group and I am delighted that she has accepted the challenge. I have yet to call together the other proposed members of that group, but there have already been some interesting suggestions made about how best to celebrate and how the celebrations might assist an emerging diocese in the Anglican family, as well as point us forward in our diocesan life. Anniversaries are always opportunities to take stock, so that we can seek God's guidance and blessing as we move into the future with confidence.

The Cathedral

The new hall/kitchen building and the reordering of the Church of St Peter and St Paul in the mid 90's culminated with the declaration by my predecessor of that former parish church as the Cathedral Church of the Diocese on St Peter's Day, 1999.

Since then the cathedral has played an increasingly prominent role in our diocesan life. However the burden of the debt incurred in building the additions to the Cathedral has always weighed heavily on the congregation. In some ways, the debt had assumed far too much prominence in the life and ministry of the Cathedral congregation and has inhibited their growth and enthusiasm for Christian life and witness. It has also led to resentment about the creation of the Cathedral by the very people for whom this is the place of regular worship and Christian life. After several years of discussion and exploration, the Finance Committee and the Diocesan Council have resolved that this debt should become a diocesan responsibility. The Treasurer will outline the proposed way forward when he speaks to the Budgets and Synod must endorse the proposal if it is to take place. I believe that this is a sensible and wholly Christian way for us to deal with this matter. I want to publicly express my thanks to the people of the Cathedral congregation who have toiled valiantly for many years to try to deal with the debt. I also want to place on record my appreciation of and thanks to the clergy who have faithfully ministered at the Cathedral, sometimes in very trying circumstances.

Laughton Bequest & The Ministry in Spirituality

Over the last few months, negotiations between our solicitors and the donor have been progressing towards the gifting of a targeted bequest from the estate of the late Misses Laughton, devout Anglican sisters who lived in

Adelaide, for the specific support of the Ministry in Spirituality in this diocese. This substantial gift will produce enough income to relieve the Home Mission Fund of the need to support this ministry, and it will enable this work to continue well into the future. When the estate is finally settled, it is anticipated that this bequest will be worth between four and five hundred thousand dollars. Thanks be to God.

Anglican – Uniting Church Matters

With the retirement of the Reverend Deane Metheringham as the Resourcing Minister, based at Clare, and of the Reverend Ted White from the Uniting Church at Jamestown, membership of the Anglican – Uniting Regional Council has been significantly diminished. The Moderator of the UCA and I have agreed that we need to re-establish the Regional Council to oversee the work of the shared ministry work in which we are engaged and to look for further opportunities to work together within the borders of the Diocese. In recent years the Uniting Church has increasingly placed lay ministers in leadership positions in congregations in Rural South Australia. This creates a particular problem in shared ministry with Anglicans because our Church has a strong commitment to reserving sacramental activity to those who are ordained. This has led to some tension in our relationship with the Uniting Church, however I am confident that we will continue to work at sharing oversight. The appointment of a new UCA minister at Ceduna, who has a strong commitment to ecumenical work, will no doubt assist this process. The ministry at Roxby Downs and at Leigh Creek is formally under a shared oversight arrangement with the Uniting Church, and there are many informal friendly relationships between Anglican and Uniting Church congregations across the Diocese.

The Registrar

At our last Synod in Whyalla, we farewelled Trevor Briggs and his wife, Anne, after nearly twenty years service to the Diocese as Registrar. I believe it was a very happy and appropriate celebration of that long and devoted ministry. I am delighted that ***Alan Jamieson*** has settled into the work of Registrar, happily and well. Many of you have come to know Alan since he began work in the middle of last year and I ought to place on record my thanks to him for the way in which he has picked up a very diverse and sometimes confusing job with enthusiasm and gentle perseverance. I know that Alan and Jane have been very much welcomed by the congregation of Port Pirie where they make their home. Members of Synod will be interested to know that the Registrar's House at Gladstone is currently commercially leased.

Clergy Changes

Towards the end of 2010 we said farewell to the **Reverend Susan Straub**, after nearly five years of ministry at Port Lincoln. Susan has retired from fulltime ministry to settle back in Adelaide where she has a small psychology practice and where she is engaged in some locum ministry work.

Father Philip Kissick has moved from Lower Yorke Peninsula Ministry District back to country Victoria and has married Ruth MacFarlane, a former Willochran, and they are settled and happy in their new life together.

Arthur and Jane Tanner, after just over three years at Leigh Creek, have moved to a Bush Church Aid appointment on Flinders Island in Bass Strait. Arthur and Jane have served almost all their formal ministry within the Diocese of Willochra and have asked that I recognize them as "Willochrans On Missionary Service". They have bought a house at Hawker and it is their intention, when they retire to shift back to the Diocese. I would encourage you to keep Arthur and Jane and their ministry in your prayers.

During the last twelve months we have welcomed several clergy and have welcomed back some others.

The Reverend Peter Linn has begun work at Port Lincoln and has settled in very happily. Peter has been well known in the Diocese for many years. He served at Auburn-Riverton for some time and most recently has been the Regional Director of BCA in South Australian and the Northern Territory, so it has been a joy to welcome him back to lead ministry in Port Lincoln. Peter and Rose have welcomed over 200 people to "Rectory Dinners" since their arrival at Port Lincoln.

The Reverend Steve and Mrs Lyn Davis were commissioned at Streaky Bay following Steve's ordination as a Deacon at St George's, Magill, his home parish, on Saturday, 17th July 2010. The congregation at Streaky Bay has embraced Steve and Lyn with open arms and is looking forward to continuing a long and fruitful relationship. It is my intention to ordain Steve to the priesthood at the forthcoming ordination.

In August last year, I commissioned the **Reverend Flo Walters** as half-time Ministry District Priest in the Ministry District of Wakefield. Flo and her husband, Geoff, are living in their own home at Owen and have quickly made friendly and fruitful relationships with the congregations in the Ministry District of Wakefield.

On 26th September 2010 at St Silas' Church at Crystal Brook, I authorized **Father Thomas Karamakuzhiyil** for ministry as a priest in the Anglican Church of Australia. Father Thomas has come to us from the Roman Catholic Tradition and spent three months living with me at Bishop's House before he worked at Port Pirie for six months. I have appointed him as locum tenens of

the Ministry District of Lower Yorke Peninsula and he seems to be endearing himself to the people there and charming them with his wit, his easy manner and his delicious food.

The Reverend David Amery returned to the Diocese in August last year and on 16th August I was delighted to commission him as Dean of the Cathedral and Priest-in-Charge of the Ministry District of Crystal Brook - Port Broughton. David and Coralie have settled in well and I am delighted with the contribution he is making, not only with his responsibilities as Dean, but also the wider diocesan community.

The Reverend Philip Hanlin who served in the Diocese at Port Lincoln, over ten years ago, is now retired, but has returned to the Diocese and has taken up residence at Leigh Creek and Blinman where he is exercising pastoral and sacramental ministry amongst the people at Leigh Creek and in the station country in the northern part of the Flinders Ranges. I am delighted that Philip and Denise are able to share their many gifts with us in this way.

The Reverend Joan Reed was ordained to the priesthood at a wonderful service at St Barnabas', Clare, her home congregation, on Saturday, 19th February this year. Joan has been licensed as Priest at Clare under our OLM program.

The Ministry Development Officer

The role of the MDO has been well established for a long time now and I was very disappointed when shortly after Synod last year, it became clear that the person I had appointed as MDO would not be able to continue in that role. Since September when his resignation formally took effect, I have been looking hard to find a suitable person to serve as our Ministry Development Officer. In the *Ministering Communities* congregations, the support of an MDO is vital. It is also true that the MDO plays an integral part in lay education and in sustaining and encouraging the clergy, both stipended and Ordained Local Ministry clergy. The MDO's ministry should also support and assist the Bishop's ministry. I am continuing to explore ways forward for the appointment of a fulltime person to serve in this vital part of our diocesan life.

Ordinations

It is my intention (DV) to hold an ordination at St Thomas' Church, Port Lincoln, on Saturday, 2nd July 2011. At that service I will ordain the Reverend Steve Davis to the priesthood and Miss Ruth Buxton, Brother Gregory Stephens SSM, and Mrs Helen and Mr Peter McAlley to the diaconate. Ruth, Peter and Helen will serve as OLMs under the OLM scheme, although Ruth's licence will be slightly broader than the Parish of Port Lincoln. Brother Gregory has just completed his fulltime theological training and will be placed in a supervised ministry position following his ordination. Steve will continue

as the Parish Minister at Streaky Bay, but as Priest-in-Charge. It is a great joy to me that we are continuing to be able to raise up people for the ministry of work and sacrament from within the Diocese as well as attract others from further afield.

Faithfulness in Service

Several years ago, this Diocesan Synod adopted *Faithfulness in Service* as the *Standard and Code of Conduct* for all those involved in ministry in the Diocese of Willochra. The Code of Conduct is not well known by clergy or by lay people in the Diocese and I would commend it to you. A copy of the code is found in our Constitution and Regulations book as Appendix 2 to Regulation 3 'The Administration of the Diocese'. While much of the document looks like it is very legalistic, there are some very helpful guidelines, particularly about ministry with children and concerning financial probity. I commend the Faithfulness in Service document to members of Synod and encourage you to become familiar with the code. I believe that it is an important part of our responsibility towards creating a safer Church, that all those with leadership responsibilities in congregations, should be aware of our agreed expectations of the way in which we deal with each other, and especially, the way in which we deal with those who are particularly vulnerable.

Child Safe Environments

Bruce Thorpe has continued to run 'Child Safe Environments' training across the Diocese. Nearly all Licensed Lay Ministers have now completed that training. All clergy must hold a current certificate of completion of this course. Such requirements are no longer optional extras. I am grateful for Bruce's willingness to offer this ministry.

THE DIOCESE: MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

The Community of St Barnabas & St Cecilia

Earlier this year, after several months of long and sometimes difficult discussions, the members of the Community of St Barnabas & St Cecilia decided to leave Peterborough and to establish their Mother House at Gladstone. As part of the move from Peterborough, Sister Jean Johnson decided that she would take up my invitation to become Residential Chaplain at The Willochra Home for the Aged at Crystal Brook. The conclusion of over ten years at Peterborough was a very emotional time for members of the Community and about 150 people from the town joined us at St Peter's Church for a special Service of Farewell and Thanksgiving for the life of the

Community in that town. Sister Sandra and Brother Neville are resident at Gladstone. Sister Jean is now firmly part of the fabric of The Willochra Home and enjoying exercising her ministry there as well as in the local church and the other members of the Community continue to live out their vocation in dispersion.

I was intrigued recently to see a new book published by the Canterbury Press in England which is called 'New Monasticism as Fresh Expressions of Church'. It is very much the case that the foundation and growth of this Community has been an exciting experiment in trying to re-interpret the monastic ideal in a way that makes sense in rural and contemporary South Australia. We are fortunate indeed to have the *Power House of Prayer* that the Community is, in the middle of the Diocese. We are also very fortunate to have dispersed membership witnessing to their particular and special vocation across the state.

Ministry at Point Pearce & in the South Australian Correctional System

At last year's Synod we committed to a deficit budget primarily in order to fund the ministry of **Grant Hay** at Point Pearce, at Port Augusta Gaol, at Port Lincoln Gaol and in Adelaide. This ministry is funded by a small contribution from Bush Church Aid, a somewhat larger contribution from the Diocese of Adelaide and the rest from the Diocese of Willochra. In 2011 I have been able to gain a further commitment of \$15,000 (which is equivalent to about one day fulltime) from the National Home Mission Fund to help fund this ministry. However, in order not to increase further the deficit it has been necessary to cut back this position from five days a week to four days a week.

It has not been easy to supervise this ministry or to encourage the Lay Minister to grow in his understanding of Anglican policy and purpose. The position is funded on a fairly straightforward basis. The Diocese of Adelaide pays for one day per week, which is ministry at the Adelaide Remand Centre. One day per week is meant to be spent at the Port Augusta Gaol and three days per week are available for ministry at Point Pearce and in the wider context of rural South Australia. While this looks like a fairly simple job description to an Anglo-Australian Rural Bishop, the practicalities of how this ministry is worked out are as complex and diverse as the community amongst which the minister is seeking to serve. David Amery, who has extensive experience working in Aboriginal communities and with urban Aboriginal people, has taken the responsibility for immediate oversight of this ministry and, a small reference group convened by BCA is again meeting with Grant on a regular basis in Adelaide. However, there are significant questions about the ongoing viability and value of this ministry. The budget for 2011 will

maintain this ministry at four-fifths level, but it is not clear to me that we should continue to pursue this ministry in its present format after this year. This continues to be a matter of concern and discussion at Diocesan Council and amongst the senior staff of the Diocese.

Back to Church Sunday

On 12th September last year about half our congregations engaged in a 'Back to Church Sunday' experience. Responses were varied and reflected the amount of energy and participation that congregational members put into the invitation process, but overall there was a strong sense that this was a worthwhile activity. Back to Church Sunday is an attempt to engage with those Anglicans who have fallen away from church attendance, but who already have a history of some connection with the local church. Across Australia this special day was a great success and the organizing committee based in Sydney reported that nearly 800 churches around Australia participated in 2010. I am hopeful that congregations will take the opportunity to engage with the Back to Church Sunday process every year and this year the date set aside for Back to Church Sunday is Sunday, 11th September. Materials are currently being printed and will be available soon. It is increasingly important that we are pro-active in inviting people to share our life and to hear something of the glorious Gospel which is so important to us. BTC is just one tool in the suite of experiences available for us in trying to encourage others to connect with the Church and so to connect with the message of God's love for us, shown in Jesus Christ. One of the characteristics of Back to Church Sunday that I most appreciate is that it enables each congregation to shape worship and hospitality events to suit the normal life of that congregation. This is not an attempt to impose a template on the Church, but a method that encourages churches to take seriously their task of making contact with those who have drifted away. I commend Back to Church Sunday to you all.

The Mission to Seafarers

In May last year Brother Martyn CSBC moved to Wallaroo with the intention of reactivating seafaring ministry at the port. There is a largely inactive seafarers' centre on the seafront, and it was hoped to operate this new ministry from there. It has proved impossible to negotiate such an arrangement and so Br Martyn, following the pattern of much seafarer ministry around the globe, has worked mainly from a small satchel in which he carries phone cards, information brochures, and Christian resources as he goes on board as a ship visitor. An ex seafarer himself, Martyn has a quick appreciation of the life and work of those amongst whom he ministers. He is in the process of setting up a small MTS Centre in part of the hall at St Mary's Church, Wallaroo.

The ministry offered to seafarers at Port Lincoln and Port Pirie continues with great enthusiasm from a small band of volunteers and some “press ganging” by Lay Chaplain Ian Pole at Port Pirie, and Secretary, Rosalind Bascombe at Port Lincoln. I know that the National Ministry Co-ordinator of MTS has also spoken with people from Ceduna/Thevenard , Whyalla/Point Lowly and Port Giles about inaugurating seafarer ministry in these places. As mining and rural production are the lifeblood of our economy, there will be growing opportunities for this type of work in future years.

Clerical Ministry Enhancement

There was some vigorous debate last year about a proposal to introduce regular clerical appraisal into the life of the Diocese. While this matter has been discussed many times in the past and indeed, I tried to implement such a proposal when I was Ministry Development Officer, no action has taken place. Last year’s Synod clearly directed the Bishop, the Archdeacons and the Ministry Development Officer to explore this matter and bring a proposal to this session of Synod. Archdeacon O’Donovan and I will present our Report this evening, and there will be an opportunity to discuss the report and proposal informally before a more formal debate.

In order to help focus the thinking of the Clerical leadership team, and so that some of the energy at last Synod was not lost, I invited Fr David McDougall, Fr Gunnar Rippon, Tim Butler and Michael Ford to meet and make a submission to the Archdeacons and me. I am very grateful for their work. I am also grateful for the submissions of other interested people who wrote to me about these matters.

I believe that it is essential that we better engage in reviewing, supporting and planning with the clergy of the Diocese, and I believe that a clear understanding of the purpose and function of such work can only enhance ministry for the benefit of us all, and for the benefit of those we seek to invite into the Christian journey.

FiFo

In mid June, Peter Palmer will conclude his ministry at Coober Pedy in order to commence work as the Anglican Chaplain to Fly In/Fly Out mining communities in northern South Australia. This is a joint initiative of BCA, the Diocese of Adelaide and our own Diocese, and mining companies as partners, and is an experiment too exciting to let slip by.

Peter and Joy will live in Adelaide and Peter's ministry will include significant amounts of time flying in and out of the northern mining camps alongside the mine workers. His time "on site" will build on the relational, counselling, referral and Christian pastoral activities that he has developed at the Prominent Hill mine site, although he will work at other sites as well.

"Off site" in Adelaide, an important part of Peter's work will be helping to support families who are left at home while the mining partner is away, and trying to link these families into local Christian communities. Peter's wife Joy, is keen to be part of this work too. Peter will be licensed in both dioceses, and will share some of the clergy development opportunities in Adelaide, so that he gets to know the clergy there, but he will remain on the payroll of the Diocese of Willochra. This work, which we hope will eventually become self funding through the financial commitments of mining companies, is being underwritten by BCA. It may be helpful to see this as a reshaping of BCA's support for the Leigh Creek ministry at a time when Leigh Creek's population is decreasing and the FiFo population living in mining camps is growing exponentially. The down side to this exciting venture is that Coober Pedy is losing an effective and well loved minister. BCA will continue to support a full time placement at Coober Pedy, and two locum ministers are already in place for the interregnum period. Please pray that God will bless this new venture, and that a new priest will be found soon to serve at Coober Pedy.

THE PROVINCE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Provincial Council

The Provincial Council has not met in the last twelve months and under the Constitution of The Province of South Australia we are required to meet before June 2011. The meeting has been scheduled for the end of May. The Provincial Council is largely a consultative body where information is shared. It is not a legislative group, but it does have some decision making power about certain funds that are held provincially.

The Provincial Stipends & Issues Committee

The Provincial Stipends and Issues Committee continues to meet and advise the three Diocesan Councils of The Province concerning recommendations for stipend and other payments.

The Diocese of The Murray

The Special Tribunal, the Church Court established in our Constitution to deal with grave allegations against bishops was convened in Adelaide in September 2010 to test the charges Archbishop Driver and I had pressed

against the former Bishop of The Murray. This was the endgame of over three years of negotiation and discussion, and it was certainly not a course of action that either of us took lightly. This is only the second time in the history of the Australian Church that such action has been taken. Bishop Davies was subsequently removed from office and prohibited from functioning as a bishop in this Church. He has subsequently joined another denomination where he lives as a layman. The Diocese of The Murray is working towards the appointment of a new bishop, and with sound and careful leadership they are looking to the future with confidence.

The legal costs incurred in this action were very significant. However the Diocese of The Murray had indemnified our legal costs. Some settlement funds from a Provincial Fund under the control of the Archbishop were made available to assist the resolution of these matters. There was no financial cost to this diocese, although the personal costs of time and emotional energy, and many trips to legal meetings in Adelaide were considerable.

THE NATIONAL CHURCH

Diaconal Presidency at the Eucharist

Relationships within the Church in Australia continue to be strained. The decision of the Diocese of Sydney to authorize deacons to preside at Holy Communion Services has resulted in an appeal to the Appellate Tribunal, the highest Church Court in our country, to establish the legitimacy of that decision. The Appellate Tribunal ruled that while there was no theological objection to this action, it was necessary for there to be a Canon of the General Synod to authorize such a change in Anglican practice in this country. The likelihood of such a Canon passing is almost zero. And so the Diocese of Sydney has proceeded without the concurrence of the rest of the Australian Church. This is the most recent of a series of events in the life of the National Church testing our common life and testing our ability to hold together and reflect something of the wider Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Sydney at the Bishops' Conference frequently has used the phrase "Loosening of the Bonds" in relation to the links between the Diocese of Sydney and the rest of the Australian Church. I very much regret these changes in our life together.

Natural Disasters

Of course there is still a great deal that holds us together and in the face of the extraordinary flooding early this year in Queensland and in Victoria and the fires in Western Australia, there has been a great generosity of spirit and assistance between every part of our Church. It seems that when we are

really tested we can work together well, but like any family, so often, we fall into internal squabbles and disputes when we lose sight of the big and more urgent picture.

General Synod

The General Synod of our Church meets once every three or four years and in 2010 the General Synod met in Melbourne from 18th of September to 24th September. Our diocesan representatives are Ms Ruth Robinson, the Ven Michael Hillier and the Bishop. A copy of the resolutions of the General Synod in 2010 which require some action by the dioceses of our Church are on the grey sheets from page 141 through to page 149. Some of these matters are on our agenda paper already and others have been left for discussion next year. I wish to comment on just a couple of these matters.

Anglican Communion Covenant: I spoke at length last year about my reservations about the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant and indeed at the General Synod I gave a long speech against the adoption of the Covenant by this Church. The Anglican Communion office in London has just recently produced study material to encourage congregations and other interested groups within dioceses to reflect on the meaning of the Covenant so that there can be some clarity about the way forward. I believe that it is important that we discuss the Covenant at some length at the next Synod meeting so that we can comply with the request of the General Synod that we should report on our discussions by December 2012. It is my intention to ask the Education Committee to suggest a way in which congregations, parishes and ministry districts might engage with this material in a helpful way so that our discussions next year can be well informed. I remain committed to an open ended familial relationship between the Anglican Churches that make up our world wide communion and I am still to be convinced that the formalized processes outlined in the proposed Covenant would in any way enhance our communion or sense of corporate identity. I am also not sure that it should be our role to seek an international profile. The Anglican Communion has always been a loose confederation of National Churches which are bound together by historic connections with the Church of England and its formularies and with a continuing participation in the Lambeth Conference. Although theological and ecclesiological disputes have threatened this familial relationship, it is not clear to me that the Covenant in any way deals with the presenting problems. Nevertheless, I think it is important that each congregation has an opportunity to engage the Covenant proposal as it sees fit.

Anglican – Uniting Church Covenant of Association: You will note on page 142 of our papers a motion from the General Synod concerning the relationship between the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia. While this motion looks straightforward, there are a great many theological issues which remain unresolved and until the Doctrine Commission of our Church has had an opportunity to respond to the Covenant of Association, I do not believe it is appropriate for us to discuss this matter at the level of our Synod. Of course, it is very appropriate that this should be discussed by the Anglican – Uniting Regional Council, where there may be some insights to share with the Doctrine Commission.

Public Affairs: The matters listed under Public Affairs, caring for the creation and understanding of energy policy, modern day slavery, the environment and alcohol abuse are all matters about which Synod members may have strong opinions and you may wish to raise these matters at a future meeting of the Synod if that seems appropriate.

The General Synod meeting is long and reasonably tedious. There are many lawyers and much of the discussion is technical and not particularly invigorating, however it is a time when we gather and hold ourselves accountable to each other under the leadership of Christ. There is a great deal of camaraderie and good humour at General Synod and meal times and worship opportunities are moments when theological differences, worship preferences and ecclesiastical perspectives all fade into the background as we discover the joy of being together as fellow travelers, following the Lord Jesus.

This is not to say that we avoid moments of real confrontation and sometimes the debate is extremely robust. With all its formality and tediousness, I believe that the synodical system that is at the heart of our Church, is a great gift that we should treasure and use effectively as we seek to be agents for Christian Mission and Ministry in our world.

Ruth Robinson serves on the Minutes Reading Committee of the General Synod and I have been re-elected to serve on the Standing Committee for the next three years before the General Synod meets again.

THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

The World Wide Scene

While Church press and sometimes even the secular press make much of divisions within the Anglican Communion, the reality is that most Anglicans go about their life and ministry in much the same way as they always have done. Tensions about the place of homosexual people within the life and ministry of the Church continue to be hotly disputed. The role of women bishops and in some places women priests, is still questioned. More serious questions about the nature of authority in our Church and about the authority of the Scriptures, which are really behind some of the presenting issues, continue to be addressed at Communion level by the Primates' Standing Committee, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Archbishop of Canterbury. There are no easy answers to any of these questions and like the various crises that have rippled through our communion in the past, I am sure these matters will eventually find a level of equilibrium. While some churches in North America and indeed a couple of dioceses have aligned themselves with the more conservative Province of the Southern Cone, it is also true that one of the South American dioceses has aligned itself with a more liberal Province of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America. Encroachments across borders continue to diminish our common witness. For some Anglicans, the Roman Catholic offer to establish an Ordinariate for former Anglicans has proved an attractive option. In Australia, the establishment of the Ordinariate seems to have been beset with misinformation and indeed some mishandling. There may well be some people who feel it necessary to move to the Roman Catholic Church for theological or other reasons, but I suspect that the numbers taking up the Ordinariate offer in Australia will be very small. At an international level the good relationships and dialogue between Anglicans and Roman Catholics continue as previously.

Link with the Diocese of Wakefield

I am sure members of Synod will remember having Father Bob Cooper from Wakefield Diocese in the United Kingdom with us last year. In a couple of months time, ***Archdeacon Brian Jeffries*** will go to spend a similar time in the Diocese of Wakefield as part of the ongoing relationship between the dioceses. If all goes well, I will be in the United Kingdom in August and early September and hope to spend a week with Bishop Stephen and Rossie during that visit. Bishop Stephen has recently been speaking to me about the possibility of Father Peter Bostock, a priest of his Diocese, coming to visit us and I hope that such exchanges between our dioceses will continue to be a regular part of our diocesan life. We can only be enriched by experiencing

something of each other's Christian journey within the Anglican family. I have, on a couple of occasions, explored the possibility of opening a 'Diocesan Link' with a diocese in Myanmar. So far this has not been possible, although we have contributed generously towards special project funding for the Church in Myanmar through the application of our Mutual Responsibility & Interdependence Fund funding. Of course many congregations and individuals have links with Christian friends across the world through our various mission agencies.

International Pilgrimages

You will recall that at last year's Synod, there was some debate about the possibility of planning a pilgrimage for Anglicans from this Diocese to an Anglican Diocese overseas. Archbishop Jeffrey Driver has led two pilgrimages in recent years with young people to Africa and the Middle East. I have not pursued this matter with much energy, and although ABM does sponsor pilgrimages, the difficulties involved may well outweigh the benefits. I am sure that Father John Deane may have something to say about this matter if you wish to approach him while he is with us at Synod.

Conclusion and Thanks

The business before us is not particularly complex, but I am not so green as to think that means a quick or easy Synod. Of course, much of the value of the Synod is in the informal time as we gather, share food and refreshments and pray and sing together. Someone said on the phone this week, "I look forward to Synod – it is like a great family reunion." May that be our experience at this Synod.

Let me offer some words of thanks.

On behalf of the Synod I thank John Reed, convenor of the Synod arrangements group here at Clare, and all those who have worked with him. I am grateful to the Roman Catholic Parish Priest, Fr Bryan Pipins SJ, for his gracious hospitality in allowing us to come to St Michael's Church for our Synod Eucharist and for the Sunday service.

I have worked with The Rev'd John Deane for over six years on the ABM Board, and it is a great personal delight to have him at our Synod. I want to acknowledge his fine leadership of our Church's official mission agency. Thank you for being with us, John.

This is our Registrar's first Synod and so there have been some natural glitches. Alan has picked up the reins with confidence and skill, ably assisted by the Church Office staff.

I am constantly grateful for the good humour and adroit bishop-taming skills of my PA, Kaye Nicolson during the lead up to Synod.

This year our Diocesan Treasurer, Michael Ford, has carried extra responsibilities and I want to thank him for his commitment and capacity. We are well served by our Treasurer.

The Vicar General is a constant and wise presence in the Diocese and a good sounding board for me, as are the two Archdeacons, Brian and Prue. They have exercised fine leadership and pastoral sensitivity in sharing the administration of the Diocese.

Our Chancellor, Mark Pickhaver, brings deep wisdom and dry humour to his tasks, and I appreciate his personal care for me.

Finally, I want to thank the clergy of the Diocese for their hard work, commitment and energy. As the American humorist and author Garrison Keilor says in one of his Lake Woebegone soliloquies, "People often don't understand.

It's not easy, being a minister."

Thank you, my brothers and sisters of the clergy for all you are and do, as we seek to lead God's people in this diocese towards a deeper and richer experience of full life in Christ.

Father, we see in Jesus Christ your love and compassion for the whole world. By your Holy Spirit, renew and empower us to witness to the world, that all may know your life and love.

Amen

The Right Rev'd Garry Weatherill
7th May 2011