

# ENCOURAGEMENT

IN STRANGE TIMES



## **Dear beloved in the Lord,**

Last week I had the privilege of having a conversation with the Right Rev Julian Dobbs, who is the Bishop of The Anglican Diocese of the Living Word. He has been very influential in my ordained ministry and a strong encouragement to me over many years.

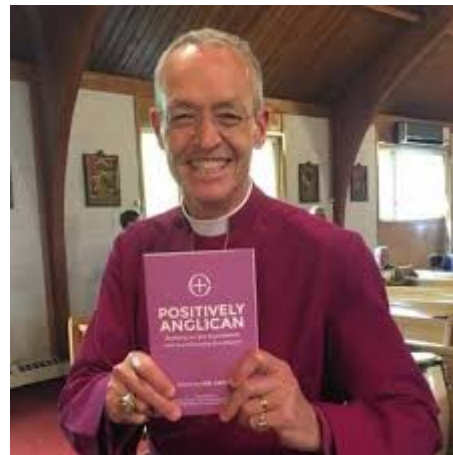
The Diocese in which Julian is the Bishop stretches from Maine to Miami and from the Bay bridge to Long Island. Headquartered in Manassas, Virginia, just outside Washington DC, is home to 39 congregations and 96 clergy.

He and his wife Brenda, have made their home in Northern Virginia since 2006. Ordained in 1991, Julian planted three congregations and served as the rector of the fastest growing Anglican church in New Zealand. He was elected and consecrated as bishop by the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) in 2011, and is a member of the College of Bishops of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). Bishop Julian is passionate about the saving power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and is committed to empowering congregations, supporting clergy, transforming injustice, inspiring local and global mission, and church planting churches

I hope you are encouraged by reading our conversation as I was in having it.

Your brother in Christ - *Joshua*

Conversation with Bishop Julian Dobbs



**JB:** Hi Julian, Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed by Australian Anglican priest over the side of the pond.

**JD:** Always good to talk to faithful Anglicans.

**JB:** Julian I have been very blessed and encouraged by your Advent Online Bible Study series that you have produced via your diocesan website. It is obvious to me that the season of Advent means a lot to you. How do you explain the season of Advent to Christians who may not be familiar with the season of Advent?

**JD:** I recently shared that Advent is a very special penitential season. Scholars believe that during the 4th and 5th centuries Advent was a season of preparation for the baptism of new Christians. During this season of preparation, Christians would spend time in penance, prayer and fasting. And so, we continue to do so as Christians today.

**JB:** As Christians we know the heart of discipleship is the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in Him as Lord and Saviour, living in light of birth, death and resurrection and his return. Why is the intentional focus on Jesus first and second coming so helpful and important for us to focus on?

**JD:** In his second letter, Peter writes about waiting. Chapter 3, verse 12, Waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God. Chapter 3 and verse 13, But according to His promise, we are waiting. And chapter 3 and verse 14, Since you are waiting. Peter's understanding of Christian faith, Christian salvation and the work of Jesus Christ, is that it is as much something concerning the future as it ever is something that concerns the past. What you are waiting for impacts the way you wait. Therefore, Christians are waiting for the coming of Christ, and as we wait, we are to live our lives in a manner worthy of naming Jesus as our Lord and Saviour.

**JB:** What is your understanding of the return of the Lord Jesus? What difference does His return make to your life and ministry and what difference should it make to us who are waiting for his return?

**JD:** Knowing that Jesus will coming again greatly steadies us in this shaky world. One verse in 25 in the New Testament touches on the return of Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke of it often. Paul called it "our blessed hope". Peter called it "our living hope". Running

## 2nd Week of Advent

unmistakably through the Bible is the unshakeable conviction and insistence that the God who is working in history and who has already established his rule in Jesus Christ will one day bring history to a goal or climax in the Son of Man's coming in glory. You can't read the New Testament and be in any doubt about that. The New Testament approaches this great theme of Christ's return, not as an arid academic exercise. Not simply to convey information. The New Testament teaches the return of Jesus Christ to steady nerves and to calm worries and to strengthen arms for everyday Christian living and work

**JB:** Something I have noticed over the years is that there is very little conversation about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule on this earth. Do you think it is important that God's people engage in this topic?

**JD:** It is important. Recall the words of the familiar carol, "Joy to the world." The final verse says,

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
And wonders of His love.

Revelation 20 says, "I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

However we understand the millennial reign of Christ, Christ will reign and we should humbly prepare ourselves as his disciples.

**JB:** Anything else you would like add about Advent?

**JD:** Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lutheran pastor, theologian, anti-Nazi dissident, who was known for his staunch resistance to the Nazi dictatorship, including vocal opposition to Hitler's euthanasia program and genocidal persecution of the Jews who was hanged on 9 April 1945 as the Nazi regime was collapsing, wrote this... The celebration of Advent is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come.

**JB:** Julian I just have one last question for you; God willing, post Covid, the next time you travel home to New Zealand, any possibility you might cross the ditch to that island that lies NNW?

**JD:** It is always a great joy for a kiwi to come to Australia, especially to be among the faithful people of God.

**JB:** Bishop Julian, thank you so much for taking the time to have this wee conversation with me! Go the Wallabies!

**JD:** So far, the AB's are doing fairly well... so....!!