



## **Presidential Address**

### **Second Session of the 51<sup>st</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Sydney**

**The Most Reverend Doctor Glenn N Davies**

15 October 2018

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Members of Synod, brothers and sisters, saints of the Most High, welcome to the second session of the 51<sup>st</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Sydney.

As we gather in the presence of God, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which we meet. In his wisdom and love, our heavenly Father gave this estate to the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. Upon this land they met for generations until the coming of British settlers. As we continue to learn to live together on these ancestral lands, we acknowledge and pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and pray that God will unite us all in a knowledge of his Son, in whom all things were created, in heaven and on earth, whether visible or invisible—for all things have been created through him and for him.

#### **Drought Relief in NSW**

We have a distinct responsibility, as members of the Diocese of Sydney, to see Christ honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community. Of course, it is so easy to be absorbed merely with the needs of those in our immediate vicinity, and sometimes that is even reduced to those in our church community. Yet the people of God from ancient times have always had responsibilities to those beyond their kith and kin, to the stranger and the alien without, as well as to the widow and orphan within. We must

resist the temptation to become a ghetto of contented congregationalists that only looks inward. We need to look outward to the world, recognising its needs, spiritual, emotional and physical, if we are to fulfil our charter of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, as Jesus describes his disciples, with a warning.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. *Matthew 5:13-16*

I was delighted to hear recently that Sydney Anglicans have raised over \$325,000 towards drought relief in central and northern NSW. Having only launched this appeal two months ago through the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid, with an appeal for prayer as well as donations, it is heartening to see the way in which we who live on the coastal regions of the State can assist those inland whose rainfall is so precarious and who have been suffering great hardships in sustained drought conditions over several years. Your gifts and prayers have reflected the grace of God—good deeds that glorify our Father in heaven. Furthermore, it is humbling to see our heavenly Father answering our prayers for rain in recent weeks.

However, our mission is not merely to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and house the homeless, for 'mankind does not live by bread alone.' We have the living bread that nourishes the soul; the living water that springs up to eternal life. We have the greatest gift of all to share with others. We want to lead people to the true light of the world, even Jesus Christ, who saves them from their sins and satisfies all their needs. As Jesus says to those who believe in him: 'You will know the truth and the truth will set you free' (John 8:32).

## **The Diocese of Bathurst**

Sometimes situations become so desperate that gospel work is threatened by the lack of resources that exist. In recent years, the Diocese of Bathurst has fallen on hard times. This has been in part due to the flow of people from the bush to the city, especially among young people, and the lack of employment opportunities in many parts of the State. Drought and bushfire have added to the woes of rural NSW.

However, the poor administration of the diocese at the beginning of this century through its ill-advised borrowing beyond its means, most notably highlighted by its accumulated debt with the Commonwealth Bank, plus the scandal of historical cases of child sexual abuse by church workers in the Diocese, has brought the Diocese to its knees, both spiritually and financially. Although the diocesan leadership has now received a deed of release from the Commonwealth Bank, the Diocese is no longer able to pay for its Bishop or its Registrar from central funds, nor can it call upon its parishes to increase the significant contribution they currently make to fund these essential positions.

In February of this year I and the Provincial Registrar, Mr Doug Marr, met with Bishop Ian Palmer and his Registrar, Mrs Karen Trafford, to talk frankly about the situation, knowing that the Diocese of Bathurst would be unable to fund their next Bishop. From these frank discussions, initiated by Bishop Palmer, a level of trust developed, which enabled a plan to be established. My overriding concern, later endorsed by the Standing Committee, was to prevent the demise of gospel ministry in Central and Western NSW.

The Diocese of Bathurst was formed out of the Diocese of Sydney in 1870, after Bishop Barker considered the reach of Western NSW was too far for his effective episcopal oversight. For the past 150 years, Bathurst Diocese has sought to grow

Anglican churches across its vast geographic area through gospel proclamation under the leadership of its bishop.

However, if the Diocese is unable to provide the finances to support a bishop, then the Diocese will lack effective leadership, which is essential to Anglican order.

What should we as Sydney Anglicans do about this situation?

We could, of course, ignore it. We could resort to the oldest excuse for not wanting to be involved: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' Yet this is not the way of Christ. Should we not be concerned that the 275,000 people who live in Central and Western NSW, and especially the 64,000, only a fraction of whom attend church, have opportunities to hear the Word of God?

Several options were canvassed, including the break-up of the Diocese into the neighbouring dioceses of the Province, as well as the return of the Diocese of Bathurst to the Diocese of Sydney. Apart from the logistics of these suggestions, the unknown component of future payments of redress for survivors of child sexual abuse makes it difficult for any diocese to assume responsibility for these liabilities.

After an independent audit of the financial viability of the Diocese of Bathurst, it was estimated that the Diocese would need \$250,000 of additional funds each year to support their Bishop and Registrar. Where the Bishop and his support staff had previously been paid by the Endowment of the See, this source is now effectively without funds to support even the Bishop.

If we as a diocese can raise more than this amount in aid of farmers in the drought, then it seemed possible that we could spend this amount to promote the work of the gospel in our neighbouring diocese.

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

*1 John 3:17-18*

The proposal was therefore put to Bishop Palmer and his leadership team that a way forward could be for the Diocese of Sydney to provide \$250,000 per annum over six years. Such a grant would be conditional upon the Synod of the Diocese of Bathurst being willing to change their *Bishop Election Ordinance 2006* such that no nominee would be considered for election to become Bishop of Bathurst without first gaining the written approval of the Metropolitan. This measure was important to safeguard the use of the money from Sydney in supporting gospel ministry, so that only a bishop who had the confidence of the Metropolitan could be elected. Such a bishop would need to teach God's word faithfully and effectively, to pastor the people of God wisely and compassionately, and to lead the Diocese in evangelistic endeavours so that Christ is proclaimed as Lord and Saviour throughout Central and Western NSW. Of course, it was evident from the beginning that any proposal of this kind would also need the endorsement of the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney.

Under the dedicated and diligent leadership of Bishop Palmer, who traversed the Diocese of Bathurst addressing deanery meetings on a number of occasions, the members of the Synod of the Diocese of Bathurst were well prepared to evaluate the options with all the facts clearly laid out before them. With grateful hearts, the Bathurst Synod enthusiastically welcomed the proposal without dissent, and voted accordingly to amend their *Bishop Election Ordinance 2006*.

For those who know the history of relations between the Diocese of Sydney and the Diocese of Bathurst, this is a very significant step forward in our mutual relationships and our desire to partner together in the proclamation of the gospel.

Furthermore, as an indication of his goodwill, Bishop Ian Palmer has announced his resignation as of the end of April 2019, in order to allow the process of electing a new Bishop to commence as soon as practicable.

This proposal now comes before this session of our Synod by way of a motion for approval. A fuller explanation of the options is found in your papers and no doubt, many questions may come to the mind of members of Synod, which I trust will be adequately answered by the mover and seconder of the motion. If the motion is passed, then the proposed Synod Appropriations and Allocations Ordinance 2018 will reflect the contribution that the Synod will make to the Diocese of Bathurst in 2019.

I realise that it is an expensive proposal for the Diocese of Sydney. However, it is a proposal worthy of consideration, as it is probably the only proposal that will enable viable gospel ministry in its Anglican formation to continue in Central and Western NSW. We have an obligation to our brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Bathurst, and indeed to those who live in rural NSW who are yet to hear the claims of Christ. There are many ways to spend money, but not all are strategic uses of such money. For the sake of the gospel, this proposal comes to the Synod, and I heartily commend it to the members of Synod.

However, I should add, that the next few years will see fresh opportunities for placing ministers of the gospel in the Diocese of Bathurst, where positions have been hard to fill from within the Diocese. I am sure that any newly elected Bishop, under this proposal, will continue Bishop Palmer's policy of allowing men and women trained at Moore College to be licensed as incumbents or assistant ministers in the Diocese of Bathurst. This is another significant challenge for our own Diocese, as too often when

opportunities for ministry beyond our Diocese arise, the comforts of living in Sydney often prevent our clergy from taking up the challenge.

My prayer is that members of both the clergy and lay people will consider the challenge of spreading the word of God to the far reaches of our State, by making sacrifices and leaving their comfort zone for the sake of the gospel.

### **GAFCON 2018**

The third Global Anglican Future Conference was held in Jerusalem in June this year. Like its predecessors in 2013 and 2008, it proved to be an extraordinary gathering of Anglican clergy and lay people from around the world, and one of the largest gatherings of Anglicans at any one conference. Part of the genius of GAFCON is its involvement of clergy and lay people, as well as bishops. In this regard, it stands in contrast to the customary occasion when the Anglican Communion is seen to be gathering, namely at the Lambeth Conference, where only bishops are in attendance. Moreover, with 50 countries represented, GAFCON was a genuine manifestation of the Anglican Communion in conference. Around 300 Australians were present. Of these, 180 Sydney Anglicans not only participated in the conference but many were instrumental in its organisation, planning and execution, chief among them our former Archbishop, Dr Peter Jensen, and Canon Daniel Willis. I am glad that we have been given notice of motions giving thanks to God for these men, and others, who have contributed so much to the success of GAFCON 2018.

The question is often asked: Why GAFCON? Is this not merely a 'ginger group', as some have labelled it? Is it a rival breakaway group from the Anglican Communion? Such facile observations are in my opinion both fatuous and misleading. GAFCON represents 70% of church-attending Anglicans around the world. It would be just as foolish to ignore its existence, as it would be to describe it as un-Anglican. One must

first ask ‘what does it mean to be Anglican?’, before one can understand the nature of the Anglican Communion.

While many answers come to mind, the answer must surely be found in the bedrock of the Reformation, when the formularies of the Church of England were founded. With the expansion of the British Empire and the evangelistic fervour of missionary societies, the Church of England spread to the far corners of the earth. Hence, the Church of England in Australia was the name of our Church from the arrival of the Reverend Richard Johnson on the First Fleet in 1788. At that time, we were part of the Church of England. While never an established church in Australia, we inherited the Canons of the Church of England, adapting them to the conditions of the colony and the emerging nation. Yet it was only in 1962, with the advent of our national Constitution, that we became truly independent of the Church who birthed us.

Nonetheless, the link with the Church of England was not entirely broken as we declared ourselves to be in communion with the Church of England. As Section 6 of our Constitution states it:

This Church will remain and be in communion with the Church of England in England and with churches in communion therewith so long as communion is consistent with the Fundamental Declarations contained in this Constitution.

Note, however, that there is no mention of the Archbishop of Canterbury in this section or in any part of our Constitution. The office of the Primate of All England is an ancient and venerable office, which we well might hold in affection, but to which we do not hold allegiance. Our communion is constitutionally with the Church of England. Yet even that is qualified: ‘so long as communion is consistent with the Fundamental Declarations’ of the Constitution.

These Fundamental Declarations include our belief in the Bible as ‘the ultimate rule and standard of faith, given by inspiration of God and containing all things necessary for salvation.’ They also include our commitment

ever [to] obey the commands of Christ, teach His doctrine, administer His sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, follow and uphold His discipline and preserve the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons in the sacred ministry.

In other words, if the language of communion is to have any meaning for Australian Anglicans, it must be consistent with our Constitution. It must be consistent with the teaching of the Bible, and specifically the commands and doctrine of Christ.

The reason why GAFCON came into existence is that parts of the Anglican Communion had departed from the doctrine of Christ. While the presenting issue was concerned with human sexuality, the underlying problem was the authority of Scripture. Furthermore, the so-called Instruments of Communion failed to address this departure from the faith ‘once for all delivered to the saints’. It is for this reason that a vast number of bishops, including the Archbishop and Assistant Bishops of the Diocese of Sydney, did not attend the Lambeth Conference in 2008. The doctrinal bond that held the Anglican Communion together had dissolved. Whereas previous Lambeth Conferences had expressed their mind through resolutions, which at least had moral force for all Anglican Provinces, in 2008 the conference was resolution-free. The agreed tenets of our Anglican faith were no longer held in common. The lure of the world’s values and the accommodation to the world’s view of human sexuality had broken the bonds of affection and the ties that bind. Echoing Ezekiel’s explanation as to the coming judgment of God upon Israel,

...for you have not followed my decrees or kept my laws but have conformed to the standards of the nations around you. *Ezekiel 11:12*

GAFCON is a reforming instrument of the Anglican Communion and calls all faithful Anglicans to stand firm for the teaching of Christ, explicitly recorded in Matthew 19:1-12. Yet it is not a single focus movement. The establishment of nine strategic networks last June, from theological education to ministry to children and youth, reflects the global reach of GAFCON in seeking to proclaim Christ faithfully to the nations. GAFCON is no threat to the Anglican Communion. It is only a threat to those who consider the Bible's teaching on sexuality is outmoded and irrelevant, or to those who want to maintain a mere façade of unity, where no real unity exists. It is for this reason that the 'Letter to the Churches', overwhelmingly endorsed by the whole assembly of GAFCON 2018, expressed the view that attendance at the 2020 Lambeth Conference could not be contemplated, if bishops from those provinces who had departed from the teaching of Christ were invited. While I have a personal respect and affection for the Archbishop of Canterbury, he carries a grave responsibility upon his shoulders. If our Anglican Communion is merely defined by historical connections and heritage, rather than a doctrinally grounded commitment to Christ and the teaching of the Bible, then our *koinōnia* is not the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. GAFCON seeks to reform and renew the Anglican Communion by reclaiming its doctrinal foundations.

### **New Zealand**

The Episcopal Church of North America, the Anglican Church of Canada and the Scottish Episcopal Church all seem so very far away, so that their endorsement in principle or in practice of the solemnisation or blessing of same-sex marriages makes little difference to our life in Australia. However, the recent events in New Zealand are much closer to home and will have a more profound effect upon us. In May this year the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and

Polynesia decided to allow diocesan bishops to authorise the blessing of same-sex marriages and civil unions. While ostensibly stating that they had not changed their doctrine of marriage, the General Synod has effectively allowed the blessing of a same-sex marriage, which is contrary to their doctrine. How can the bride of Christ justify the blessing of a sexual union that is not in accord with Christ's teaching? Just as we cannot pronounce a blessing on an adulterous relationship (notwithstanding a couple's claim that they are deeply in love), so we cannot pronounce God's blessing upon sexual acts that God declares to be sinful. As Bishop Donald Robinson once told me, the most important part that the minister plays in solemnising a marriage is to pronounce God's blessing, and God does not bless sin. Regrettably, there are church leaders in Australia who see no problem with these developments in other Anglican provinces, and would even wish such innovations were made lawful in the Anglican Church of Australia.

Following the decision of their General Synod a number of clergy and their congregations decided to leave the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, while still wishing to remain Anglicans. They felt that they could no longer stay in a Church, which had abandoned the teaching of Jesus and compromised the fundamental principles of their faith. Unlike Australia, a change in the Canons in New Zealand automatically takes effect in each diocese.

Prior to their General Synod's decision, I wrote to the three Primates of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia expressing my grave concern about the implications for Australian Anglicans if such a departure from the historic tenets of our Faith were to transpire. Following that correspondence, after their General Synod, I was invited by the Primates to come and hear the story of their journey as to how they had come to the decision they had made. I gladly crossed the Tasman to

meet with the Primates and other leaders of the Church, including some senior clergy who were already in marriages with same-sex partners, as well as those who considered it intolerable to remain in a Church with such modified canons. I was warmly welcomed by the Primates and treated with respect and honour. I listened carefully to their explanation as to how they had come to the decision of the General Synod, after more than thirty years of debate about the issue.

However, what became clear to me was that of the three main groups in the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, the revisionists were not happy, as they saw it as mere breadcrumbs, to quote one of those present, to allow the blessing of same-sex unions without allowing the solemnisation of same-sex marriages. On the other side were those who thought the General Synod had abandoned the Church's teaching on human sexuality, forcing them to leave. Then there were those in the middle, who mistakenly thought that the measures taken would at least keep the Church together, as no one would be forced against their conscience to bless same-sex unions. In my estimation, no one group was happy with the result, as no one's objectives had been achieved.

It became obvious to me that the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia had already embraced the normalisation of same-sex marriage, when clergy in such marriages now held senior positions as Deans and Archdeacons. There had clearly been no appetite for discipline among the bishops, despite the charge to exercise discipline, which the Ordinal declares to be one of the duties of a bishop. I soon recognised that after thirty years of debate, the pressure to change their Canons and 'conform to the standards of the nations' had finally come to pass, and there was no turning back.

I therefore proposed a way forward for the Primates to consider. Since the report coming to their General Synod had recognised that there would be those who would dissent from its recommendations, the Church should therefore deal graciously with those who could not accept any foreshadowed changes to the Canons. I suggested that the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia should therefore allow those clergy and churches who could not stay in the Church, to leave and start a new, parallel Anglican Church, and to do so with their property. Parallel jurisdictions are not unknown in the Anglican Communion, as continental Europe has two independent ecclesiastical jurisdictions and two extra-provincial jurisdictions aligned to the See of Canterbury. All four are recognised as authentic Anglicans on the Anglican Communion website.

I argued that the way the leadership of the Church could demonstrate their genuine commitment to the gospel of grace was to allow those who dissented from the General Synod's decision to leave peacefully and honourably. I suggested that the adversarial, litigious approach adopted by The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada ought not to be repeated in the South Pacific.

I am still awaiting the outcome of their consideration of this proposal, the full text of which may be found on the Sydney Anglicans website for those who wish to know more details. However, at the end of September, there were nine clergy and four congregations, representing approximately 1000 members who have or are planning to disaffiliate from the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, in addition to a parish in West Hamilton, which has already disaffiliated in anticipation of these developments. We should support these faithful Anglicans who wish to remain part of the Anglican family as they seek to establish an extra-provincial diocese. Gafcon Australia has launched an appeal to assist them as they set up this

new structure and I commend this appeal to members of the Synod. Non-tax deductible donations may be made through the Archbishop of Sydney's Anglican Aid.

However, the seriousness of the New Zealand experience should not be underestimated. This month a number of dioceses are holding their Synods around Australia. Many of these have received notice of motions seeking the Synod's support for the blessing of same-sex marriages. No doubt, the movers of these motions have taken courage from the recent resolution of the Synod of the Diocese of Wangaratta, which commended 'the pastoral value of the Bishop authorising a Form of Blessing for optional use in the Diocese of Wangaratta alongside, or in addition to, a wedding conducted by a civil celebrant.'

Yet, these moves are ill-informed and premature. The General Synod Doctrine Commission has been asked by the General Synod to prepare a number of essays on marriage, following the Commonwealth Parliament's passing of legislation to change the definition of marriage. Included among these topics is the case for and against same-sex marriage and/or the blessing of same-sex unions. It is therefore unwise and untimely for Diocesan Synods to be requesting their bishops to consider authorising liturgies for same-sex blessings before the Doctrine Commission has published its report, which will be available before the next session of the General Synod in 2020.

## **Freedom**

Having endured what seemed like a marathon, national debate on same-sex marriage over the course of last year, I suspect that Synod members are weary of this topic appearing again in my Presidential Address. Yet the issue is not going to go away. This year the Uniting Church of Australia changed its laws to allow ministers to solemnise same-sex marriages, and thereby abandoned the historic teaching of the

Church and of Christ. The explanation of this decision was interestingly couched in the language of freedom. In the reported words of the Church's President:

We accept the diversity in our midst and we are allowing our members the freedom to decide on whether they conduct same-sex marriages or not.

This misconceives the nature of true freedom. True freedom is not the absence of all constraint—'freedom from'—but rather—'freedom to'—the freedom to be what we were made to be. For example, God is free, but that does not mean that he is free to lie. The freedom that the gospel offers is a freedom that draws us to the doctrine of Christ.

Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are truly my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' *John 8:31-32*

The truth that Jesus offers liberates. It frees us to serve God and to care for others, as we follow Christ's teaching. I am therefore pleased that the long awaited *Human Sexuality Pastoral Guidelines* have come before us this session. This is the result of an extensive study of the issues that flowed from the Doctrine Commission's Report on 'Human Sexuality and the Same-Sex Marriage Debate' that was presented to the Synod in 2015. It is full of wise advice for pastors and lay people as they seek to address the manifold, pastoral issues involved in caring for all kinds of people in our church, especially those struggling with same-sex attraction. For we all experience temptation in different ways. We live in a fallen world, and while we may each be susceptible to specific kinds of temptations, as the Devil surely knows our weaknesses, the transformative power of the Holy Spirit ought not to be underestimated. It is he who brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, whether that be an added measure of patience, kindness, gentleness or self-control as required. For it is by his power we resist temptation and seek to live lives of godliness

and purity, as disciples of Christ. ‘It is for freedom, that Christ has set us free’ (Galatians 5:1). Or in words of the Collect for Peace—

O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: Defend us, thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This prayer may well be one we regularly return to in the days ahead, as we find the freedoms we once enjoyed being pared back.

In this past week, the enemies of religious freedom have been hard at work. The selective and distorted leaking of the recommendations of the Ruddock Review has been nothing more than anti-religious activism masquerading as journalism.

This week has exposed the hypocrisy of those who, during the same-sex marriage campaign, repeatedly told the Australian public that same-sex marriage would have absolutely no consequences for religious freedom.<sup>1</sup> Now they have revealed what has always been their agenda—to force religious schools to play by secular rules.<sup>2</sup>

Although I am wary of commenting upon a report that has yet to be released, the Ruddock Review, after a careful and thorough analysis and extensive public consultation, has proposed a set of sensible recommendations to ensure that Australia protects all human rights, including freedom of religion.

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<sup>1</sup> For example – “Amending the Federal Marriage Act will not, and cannot, affect religious freedoms. Only the secular, legislative meaning of marriage will change” -

<https://www.mamamia.com.au/same-sex-marriage-myths/>

<sup>2</sup> David Marr – “When faiths take public money to run schools and hospitals in the UK they have to play by secular rules” (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/11/the-right-to-expel-children-from-school-isnt-about-freedom-its-about-cruelty>)

There is, in fact, nothing objectionable in the Ruddock recommendations. But in an attempt to scupper the Ruddock ship while still in the docks, its recommendations were mischievously misrepresented. Then ensued handwringing hysteria about an imaginary epidemic of gay students being expelled from religious schools, and this was accompanied by much ill-informed knee-jerk reaction.

Let's be very clear. Anglican schools in Sydney do not expel students for being gay. It is an absurd proposition and it is certainly not something we asked for in our submission to the Ruddock Review. We would gladly support any amendment to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* which would clarify this. This issue was nothing more than a beat up and smoke screen to discredit the Ruddock Report and obscure the real issues.

What we have asked for is simply this: freedom of religion. People of all faiths and none should have the right to speak and act according to their fundamental convictions. Church schools should NOT be forced to play by secular rules. It goes to the very heart of religious freedom that religious organisations should be able to operate according to their religious ethos. Anglican schools, if they are going to remain Anglican, must be able to employ staff who support the Christian values of the school. When the Ruddock Report and the Government's response is released, it will be time to have an informed national conversation about this. Despite the delay in its release, the report deserves due process and careful analysis before it is kyboshed by the media and ill-informed political commentators.

Yet our real weapons are not political or strategic, however much we may engage in the national debate, but spiritual, requiring the whole armour of God. For it is ultimately the gospel that will change people's hearts and minds. We must never forget that, even when Christianity is in the process of being marginalised in our

society. The aftermath of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has weakened the standing of the Church in the eyes of many, and rightly so, I regret to say. Although we have over the years developed a Pastoral Care and Assistance scheme for the survivors of child sexual abuse, the Standing Committee has rightly agreed that our Diocese should also participate in the Commonwealth National Redress Scheme. This reflects our ongoing commitment to child protection and the care of the most vulnerable in our churches. One cannot underestimate the importance of the *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2018*, recently passed by Standing Committee, as it strengthens the screening, training and support of volunteers and paid church workers working with children.

Our allegiance to Christ should galvanise our renewed calling to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that people may put their faith in the Lord Jesus and find true freedom.

### **Armistice Day**

On 11 November this year, we shall celebrate one hundred years since the end of hostilities in World War I. In the war to end all wars, over 10 million military personnel lost their lives in pursuit of freedom, and about 8 million civilians were killed, let alone another 23 million wounded military personnel. Our own country's casualties included the death of 60,000 Australians and 150,000 wounded. Sadly, such freedom from tyranny was to last barely twenty years before another horrific war was unleashed upon the world.

At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918, the bells of Christian churches rang out across our city and our nation. While bells were first introduced to call people to church, this was an appropriate gesture for inviting people to give thanks to God for the end of the war. It would be a fitting reminder for

this generation, therefore, if all our churches could ring their bells on Sunday, 11<sup>th</sup> November this year. The bells of St Andrew's Cathedral will be rung for 60 seconds at 10:59am to precede the customary minute's silence at 11am, and I invite all our churches to ring their bells on that day. While wars and rumours of wars will continue until Christ returns, we should be ever thankful for the peace and security that we enjoy in our land. Many Christians around the world struggle in the face of limited resources, lack of freedom, political oppression and religious persecution. Yet they rejoice in the knowledge that God will bring an end to all suffering, an end to deprivation, disease and death. They know the true freedom that sets them free and which will last forever.

As we commit ourselves to the business of this session of our Synod, may our eyes be fixed firmly upon Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faithfulness that we may not grow weary in our service of him.

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

*Hebrews 12:2-3*

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