

## THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

to the

First session of

the 53rd Synod of the Diocese of Melbourne

Wednesday 16 October 2019

The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier

Archbishop of Melbourne

Let me first acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations, the traditional owners of this land on which we meet, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

Welcome to this first session of the 53rd Synod of the Diocese of Melbourne.

And I commence with these words of prayer in the Woi Wurrung language that were first sung as a hymn at the Merri Creek School over 150 years ago.

*Pundgul Marman, bar marnameek*

*Nerrembee borun, yellenwa nulworthen bopup Koolinner*

*'O God, Lord God bless your Aboriginal people always.'*

I have been greatly encouraged to learn about the publication of an exciting new curriculum resource for school children that has been written by Professor Marcia Langton called, *Welcome to Country: An introduction to our First Peoples for Young Australians*. The publication of this work along with extensive Teachers' Notes offers

for the first time a comprehensive curriculum resource for Australia's school students to learn about the first peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in a way that is not shackled to the ignorance and racism that has been characteristic of most treatments of these Australians in school curricula. There has been good collaboration with Melbourne Grammar School in this development and Professor Langton continues as a Fellow of Trinity College. It is well worth your effort to find the Teachers' resource, it is available for free download and has so many links to other web based resources that you don't need to be child to enjoy the benefit of this work. It is important that all Australians learn about and respect the culture of the First Australians.

Back in 2015, the Brotherhood of St Laurence invited Lord Maurice Glasman to give the Sambell Oration for that year. Some of his words at that time are directly relevant to us tonight. He said, "In order to be of contemporary relevance, you need to strengthen your tradition, renew your ethos and modernise your vocation through the ancient truths of your calling." I think that St Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1 resonate strongly with this opinion, "Rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands, for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and love and of self-discipline." At a time when Timothy seems to be wavering in his Christian discipleship he is called back to live in the reality of "a spirit of power and love and self-discipline". It is such principles that Glasman encourages us to embrace when he spoke about achieving contemporary relevance, 'strengthen your tradition, renew your ethos and modernise your vocation through the ancient truths of your calling.'

We live in turbulent times. At one of my breakfast conversations in 2011, in Federation Square, I noted that our society exercised 'an optimism about a secular ethic, but a doubtfulness about the value of an explicitly Christian motivation.'<sup>1</sup> We certainly live in a time of anxiety and this alone is a great challenge to our Christian discipleship. The phrase, 'spirit of cowardice', in 2 Timothy 1 can be understood in this way. Fear that leads to anxiety is crippling for our discipleship and seems to have taken Timothy to a place where he was distancing himself from Paul's mission and thus from the mission of Jesus.

We are immersed in a society which has its own cultural values as we seek to 'renew our ethos and modernise our vocation through the ancient truths of our calling' or in other words seek to shape the culture of our life by the revelation of God in Christ. We are all negotiating new territory where the relationship between church and society continues to change. I went to a state school in Queensland and at our morning assembly we would sing hymns and pray the Lord's Prayer led by our school Principal who was a Methodist lay preacher. This seemed unexceptional and many other examples could be cited of earlier eras that would seem strangely unfamiliar today. It does not get mentioned often but I suspect that a longer view of history will show that the last example of church authority exercising decisive influence on national social policy was a little over a decade ago when the proposal for a Charter of Human Rights was withdrawn and not legislated for in the Federal Parliament after resistance from senior church leaders amongst others.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Better to give than to receive,' Archbishop's Conversation at BMW Edge, Federation Square on 25 May 2011

I am very aware that the momentum of decisions in the public sphere made in recent years, whether concerning refugee policies, same sex marriage, euthanasia or abortion has been made different from the position I have taken. Undoubtedly, the failures to protect children in churches and other institutions has damaged the public standing of churches generally. Unlike other institutions where that failure has occurred Churches still seek to speak with authority on moral issues into the society. As I noted earlier the wider society does not seem receptive as once it might have been to that input.

Same sex marriage and the blessing of same sex civil marriages is the singular social issue, amongst those I have listed that has been internalised, as the issue of our times for most churches and certainly within the Anglican Church. You will know that I have referred a decision of the synod of the Diocese of Wangaratta providing for the blessing of same sex civil marriages to the Appellate Tribunal of the national church. Despite the many other challenges that properly concern Christians this one issue seems to be the one that most polarises Christian denominations. Matters of sexual identity are obviously very personal to who we are and how we interact in society. The Anglican Communion has made it clear over the past two decades that while it affirms marriage as between a woman and a man it also affirms the place of LGBTQI people within the life of the Church. For some this is a big stretch. We know that there are passionately held views around how this is or even can be done. Equally, I suspect that when we are in relationship with people in our families or

congregations we manage different opinions and identities very differently from when it is a debate amongst people we don't know personally.

All this is to say that we can no longer rely on the culture around us to be a mere projection of our church culture or even to have extensive areas of overlap at the places that may matter to us. That is not to say that we live in some Christian bubble that is distinct from the society that we otherwise inhabit. I believe that Christ is always the judge and transformer of culture as the coming reign of Christ is anticipated by the people of God. This raises the question of the kind of culture we have in the Church. At the meeting of the Australian bishops earlier in the year I spoke about this. I believe that we are more likely to reach good outcomes if we face challenging times with the confidence that we are resilient and can mutually rely on each other. Debates about human sexuality struggle to be carried out in moderation. It is easy for such discussion to leave some feeling unsafe, others unheard and others left wondering why amongst the many things that urgently press upon us, this debate seems to have claimed such an urgency. In any case there will be opportunity, when motions that relate to same sex marriage and same sex blessing are discussed later on in our order of business, to shape the culture that we share by the way we speak and the way we listen.

Over the last 10 months I have had many opportunities to speak with clergy and lay members of the diocese about ministering in a time of change. Eleven out of twelve planned Archdeaconry consultations have taken place, two youth consultations, two multicultural ministry consultations and an Indigenous ministry consultation, all this

is in addition to many parish, school and agency interactions that have happened throughout the year. At these times I've been keen to understand the experience of clergy and lay members of our Church as they respond to many changes within our ministry environment. Some of these are changes we've wanted to bring about while others are ones that have arisen in the external regulatory environment and the need to conform to good practice.

I would like to spend some time with you talking about 'culture' and the culture we need for our times. It is easy to use this word culture and speak about culture change or the importance of culture in powering the fulfilment of the vision. Culture is about the shared ideas, customs and social behaviour of any particular group of people. Culture can and does exist within a diocese, a denomination, a parish, congregation or other parts of the communities we create as we gather in the Church.

Culture carries values that inform expectation and decision-making in the way that the members of any group interact together. Ultimately any human culture comes under the judgement of God and we look to the teachings of Jesus as the rule of life we have as Christians. I have been keen to understand what kind of a culture we have and what kind of culture we need in order to be fit for ministry in our time.

I think that it is fair to say that we have for many years had a parochial culture. I am using that term here in a descriptive rather than pejorative way. Maybe it arose

from the pioneering period when many churches were commenced throughout the diocese of Melbourne, which then covered the whole of Victoria. Right from the beginning of the Diocese's existence, Bishop Charles Perry emphasised establishing churches in the country towns and settlements of Victoria. Appeals were made to the citizens of the many communities at that time and very likely a friendly rivalry existed as people built their parish churches, erected memorials, installed stained glass windows and other things that marked them out from the other denominations in their location or other Anglican congregations in their district. Benefaction from wealthy church members, fundraising within the community and periods of indebtedness as loans were paid off were typical of this period. As you would expect these parishes developed a culture that was fit for their time. They were independent and self-organising.

Culture of course endures over time and can be remarkably resilient even in changed circumstances. The thing about culture is that it is remarkably difficult to fully account for from the inside. Culture often expresses itself in conflict situations within church communities. At such times most of the people within the community experiencing conflict lack a critical distance to evaluate the cultural influences underlying the events that they are caught up in. They know that something powerful is at stake but may not know how the parts of the culture come together to form the whole. I suspect that process is at work in our church nationally and internationally.

Culture is not necessarily bad on its own or defective. It just may be that it doesn't align with where the ministry of any faith community needs to be at that particular time. A parochial culture where a geographically defined faith community tends towards high autonomy, high self-sufficiency along with local distinctiveness makes sense in certain situations and times. The other side of autonomy and self-sufficiency often reveals itself in a reluctance to collaborate or engage with influences outside of the parish.

Speaking into the experience and context of the Roman Catholic Church, author Chris Lowney remarked, 'Without a willingness to confront bad news, share facts widely, and respond with determination and urgency, the Church will never solve its present and future challenges.'<sup>2</sup>

You can see how Lowney is speaking into this question of culture. His response is to deal with reality as the basis of how we look to the future. It is easy in any human community for culture to inhibit a realistic appraisal of the present situation. Lowney identifies a couple of things that are worth our attention. I have described them differently but I think that you will get his point.

I often say that the 'truth is friendly' - not a big leap from Jesus' words that the 'truth will set you free' (John 8.32). I think that this is Lowney's point when he says

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<sup>2</sup> Chris Lowney, *Everyone Leads: How to Revitalise the Catholic Church*. (He visited Melbourne and Ballarat during September 2019)

'deal with reality as the basis of how we look at the future'. Culture informs how we look at the world and we can even discover that we prefer a culturally informed perspective over reality. I think that this is one of the characteristics of the New Testament period: that Jesus and his disciples looked at their culture with a confronting clarity - reality was the launching pad for the insight they showed in announcing God's reign in the world of human affairs. Lowney's other point is that issues need to be approached with 'determination and urgency'. This is hard enough to see as a cultural value in our wider community and certainly can be missing in churches. 'Determination and urgency' are at the heart of our aspirations in Mission Action Planning.

Back in June 2015 I spoke to the members of Synod at the time in these words: "You should be expecting the bishop and archdeacon concerned to ask your parish or other ministry about your Mission Action Plans. I want to see a renewal of Mission Action Planning in the forefront of our thinking and action. We are fortunate to have over a decade of experience in mission action planning in this diocese but I am sure that it has not yet delivered us its full potential. Ask yourself as I speak, do you know if your parish has a Mission Action Plan and if so do you know its main points? Do you evaluate your progress towards its implementation at your parish council or through your wardens, is it reported on at your annual meeting? How would parishioners learn about it? Is your parish budget framed on its principles?"

I mention what I said four years ago because this expectation gives a framework to manage the 'determination and urgency' that Lowney advocates for within our faith

communities. It also gives us an opportunity to open our local reality to the concern and awareness of the wider family of the church in the Diocese. I don't think that we are as effective as we could be, to quote Lowney again, in 'confronting bad news'. I recall saying here at Synod a few years ago that I could not rule out a levy on parishes to meet the redress responsibilities that we have on account of past failures to keep children safe. That statement certainly prompted some people to write and urge me to do what I said I couldn't do - rule out that possibility. We know that in some dioceses parish accounts have been emptied to meet redress payments along with parish assets being sold for the same purpose. I'm not raising this again so much as to debate the policy but rather illustrate how, at a time when our expectations are challenged we react from the culture that we inhabit, in our case a parochial culture. I long for a culture that is resilient because it is founded on the completely reliable character of God and the divine revelation to us in the incarnation, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. This is the faith that has inspired the martyrs of the church since the days of Jesus himself.

In contrast to a 'parochial' culture it is easy to imagine 'diocesan' as the alternative adjective. I have found at the many consultation meetings I have participated in this year that a frequently used phrase to introduce a question is 'What is the diocese planning to do ...'

To repeat some actual questions,

"How can the Diocese assist inner city parishes with the burgeoning costs of maintenance and insurance?"

“To what extent is the Diocese supporting refugees?”

“How is the Diocese working to support young families entering the ordained ministry?”

“What is the Diocese doing about providing for churches in the new growth areas and inner-city regrowth areas?”

I think that you get the picture, there are some things that are of concern that seem properly outside of the scope, resources or ability of the local congregation and it is natural to look for the next level of the church that touches on these wider expectations.

Irrespective of how it might seem to appear from the vantage point of a parochial culture I described earlier, it is neither me, nor the bishops, nor the people who work in the Diocesan Office who constitute ‘the diocese’. Surprising as it might be, you the members of the Synod as you gather probably come closest to constituting the body which is most representative of the diocese. You after all are the electors of the Archbishop and the electors of the members of Archbishop in Council, you set the legislative parameters that guide the operation of the Church in this Diocese. I look to you to carry the story of what you have done here in Synod as your telling of the story of what the Diocese does to your parishes and faith communities.

As you know I have committed to a range of ministry initiatives throughout the diocese. I would like to speak about them and the kind of culture they commend and

the kind of culture that they in turn need to succeed. There are always early adopters and also others who look for more reasons to embrace an initiative, perhaps at the other end there are people who remain unconvinced despite the evidence.

Back in 2012 when I launched the Bishop Perry Institute I identified evidence based research as the best means of commending initiative out of the many possible things that might seize our attention. The integration of practice, evidence and innovation was at the heart of that launch's aspiration. I'm pleased that what we now call Parish Mission Resourcing has picked up and developed this theme. From learnings gleaned in a wide range of contexts a practice model has been developed that sees the parish mission resourcing team apply three principles to their different areas of work, firstly coaching, secondly a commitment to a learning curriculum and thirdly the formation of a community of practice. From the application of these three principles there have been encouraging results.

Do we have a sufficient sense of urgency and accountability? We rely on the early adopters, the people who discern how such things will resource their own hopes and aspirations. We operate with a high degree of subsidiarity where decisions that affect ministry vitality sit with local communities, with their parish council, their wardens and their priest. When things are well and ministry vitality is increasing it makes sense to cheer things on, they probably don't need much extra attention. But I also know that we have other circumstances where ministry vitality declines and effective initiatives are not taken up. I think that we need real time data collection so that trends in congregational attendance, age profile and financial commitment

at the very least can be available to the archdeacons and the bishops as well as the wardens, priest and parish council to reveal trends. I'll mention a few other things later but suffice it to say here that we must not fail to examine a culture where difficult things are hidden or only revealed at the conclusion of an incumbency when other processes are activated.

Parish Mission Resourcing in its various expressions is one of the initiatives I have encouraged you to be part of as clergy and as lay members of faith communities. It comprises the diocesan coaching program, the parish renewal program, consulting services to children and families' ministry, and consulting service to youth ministry. There are three full-time and one part time staff members who support this work. It is something that I intend will be a 'high leverage' activity where, with these modest inputs, vitality and flourishing are enabled in multiplying terms.

Over the course of the past decade the practice model I have briefly described has developed and I think embodies aspects of the culture we want to have as 'fit for the times'. I'm pleased to tell you that the coaching program continues to grow, expanding from 73 coaching clients in July last year to 94 at the same time this year. Over the same period the coaching team grew from 36 coaches to 44. In the spirit of seeking an evidence base for these initiatives the program has been the subject of a study by the Christian Coaching Institute, which has noted that, while a number of denominations in Australia have sought to introduce coaching as a broadly-embraced discipline, the Diocese of Melbourne has succeeded where most others

have failed. Thanks to Ken Morgan and Carol Clark and the 138 other participants I have just mentioned.

One of the keys to the success of the coaching program has been the fact that it has grown incrementally and, in the way I have just been speaking about, was introduced voluntarily and has been commended beyond the early adopters by the evidence of its benefits. Ken and Carol give oversight to the program, brokering the coaching relationships and monitoring progress to ensure continuity and effectiveness. Along with ongoing professional development and peer support, these elements have proved strong foundations for the effectiveness of this initiative.

It is my view that all ministry has its challenges, success always looks easy when it is accomplished but we all know that it takes much patient and disciplined effort. The parish renewal program has continued to provide opportunities for smaller parishes to grow. Four parish renewal cohorts, what were referred to earlier as communities of practice, continued through 2019. The fourteen parishes that comprise these four cohorts all have less than 85 Sunday attenders. In the period between March 2018 - March 2019 overall attendance across these 14 parishes declined by 4%. This is the patient and disciplined commitment to embracing such an initiative that we need to affirm, it is about persistence and resolve. I am told that some of these parishes have reported attendance growth since March, improvement may be slow. This is where the real time collection of data is needed as we learn what has been helpful and what needs to be revisited. That is what a community of practice is about. It is also about not just struggling through on your

own. An additional Parish Renewal Cohort was launched in 2019 with three participating parishes. A short cohort around mission action planning is being piloted with three parishes in the Oodthenong Episcopate and a multicultural cohort is planned for 2020.

The primary service that is offered by Dorothy Hughes in Children's and Families ministry is a community of practice built around the Join-the-Dots program provided by Intergen (formerly the Victorian Council of Christian Education). In 2019 two new communities were commenced serving a total of eight parishes. Participants in previous Join-the-Dots cohorts have been drawn into an ongoing community of practice with learning facilitation provided by Intergen. Dorothy is supported in her role as Children's and Families ministry consultant by a reference group comprised of specialist children's and families ministry coaches.

The youth ministry consultancy led by Conrad Parsons applies a similar methodology to that already described. Five youth ministry specialists are coached and resourced by Conrad. Each of these in turn leads a small community of mostly volunteer youth leaders, providing coaching and learning facilitation. All told there are twenty youth leaders benefiting from these groups. Two further communities of practice are offered for staff youth ministers. These are peer-led and overseen by the youth ministry consultant. I want to appreciate the contribution of Ridley College and Graeme Stanton and all who have helped him to provide new training seminars for parish youth leaders. A renewed pastoral concern for teenagers has generated new youth ministries in several of our parishes. The experimental approach taken,

together with genuine care for young people, is to be commended. Every parish must respond in appropriate ways to the spiritual needs of those who are not yet adults. Thank you for engaging in this vitally important ministry.

Many of you would have noticed the increased number of reports about youth depression, anxiety and disengagement. Mental health issues appear to be increasing proportionately with the increased uncertainty in Australian society and indeed the current global context. This uncertainty is amplified among our newest citizens who came to this country as refugees. Our diocese remains strongly committed to full integration of all Christians and celebrates the beauty of the diverse cultures present in our nation.

I have introduced a twice-yearly youth forum, consulting with a group of 24 youth leaders (two from each archdeaconry). Each forum has helped to sharpen our diocesan aspiration for youth ministry and ensure that its leadership is being developed and resourced. Conrad recruited representatives to each forum mindful of gender balance and language and cultural background.

Providing a supportive and challenging environment through the three components of the practice model has given encouraging signs of significantly improving ministerial wellbeing and ministry effectiveness along with the practice of ministry in local congregations.

So what is the sort of culture that supports these encouraging outcomes? First of all it is about looking at our ministry with clear eyes, naming the circumstances as they are and then seeing how best to respond. Looking at international best practice requires a wide vision and a culture that seeks to learn. Taking initiative in our Diocese needs an aspiration and belief that the parish church can meaningfully engage with local communities as well as a shared willingness to provide resourcing. For clergy and local church communities the culture that supports these outcomes involves, once again, a learning disposition and the willingness to embrace accountability as new things are attempted.

Looking wider, shared resourcing and local implementation are all significant principles that support a culture for our times.

As I said earlier, Government legislation has required our significant attention to regulatory compliance to ensure that our churches are safe places. This has placed additional demands on parish administrations and on the diocesan office as we seek to ensure our operations are meeting expected legislative standards. I urge you at your parish council to ensure that you step up to ensure our churches and associated organisations are safe places now and into the future for all with whom we have contact. This is again where culture is so important. We need to have equal concern, across all the activities we do, to be safe for children and vulnerable people. That means it is everyone's business and everyone's responsibility to make this happen. We are currently initiating a self-review using material from the Commissioner for Children and Young People and other sources to better understand how we are

meeting the Victorian and National Child Safe Standards. This will involve each Parish and Authorised Anglican Congregation (AAC) completing a self-assessment tool. Our project officer, Amanda Lincke, will be distributing this self-assessment tool to you next week. It is essential that this is completed by the end of November. I realise that this will be time consuming and ask you to approach this task with urgency in the confidence that your contribution will materially add to our diocese truly being a child safe organisation. I also stress that this is an educative and formative process - it needs to be completed with frankness about the current practice in your parish or AAC and is intended to shape how we resource and monitor our future activities in this area.

While compliance remains a common operational requirement for us all, I am heartened by the diversity the diocese nurtures and expresses through the breadth of parish congregations and facilities. Many of the Archdeaconry consultations raised the multicultural character of their local communities and how demographic changes across the diocese have influenced the way we approach mission. Language ability, cultural understanding, employment, participation in schools and training facilities along with insecurity of housing were all highlighted as significant issues for recent migrants and refugees, along with others in our community.

Jesus encourages us to nurture relationships with him and with each other and with our neighbour and with people we might not yet even know. Ecclesially, we experience that most often in the context of a local congregation. A local congregation is a full experience of the Church, remember that Jesus says, "where

two or three gather together in my name I am there in their midst". At the same time, it is not the entirety of the Church. Our experience in our congregational life is always full and at the same time open to being stretched by the wider dimensions of the life of Christ. Whether on account of age or ethnicity our congregations will often have that "not yet complete" character when compared with our suburbs in which we are located. It is not surprising in that light, that the constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia identifies the diocese as the foundational unit of the Church. It is within the diversity of age, experience, ethnicity, along with social and economic advantage and disadvantage that we have opportunity to experience the Church in all its fullness. A rigid parochial culture closes us off from that more complete reality if we think that our experience of congregational life is all that there is to the Church. I am glad that we have a national and international perspective of the Church because what I have said applies also to these wider expressions of God's people gathered as his body, his Church.

The Archdeacons in their roles as missional leaders face the challenges of mission in diverse social and economic situations. During the Archdeaconry consultations I heard the need expressed to better share resources, especially where there are a number of parishes in close proximity to one another. Better equipping lay people to fulfil the missionary commitments of their baptism along with reviewing clergy selection, training and formation were also highlighted. Despite various attempts to develop language learning in schools I find that far more of us are monolingual than multilingual. This means that we frequently need to recruit clergy with specific

language skills if we are to gather new communities of faith and become more representative of Melbourne and Geelong generally. All of this suggests that we should encourage a big picture of the mission of the Church and our part in it. I suspect that this is rather like the cultural change that makes us more completely a Child Safe Church. You see the signs of the cultural change when people who ordinarily would not think that it is their concern really embrace the imperative for each person, each church member to bear the responsibility.

We need to be clear that our core business is mission and growing and enabling disciples in Christ. Recognising our cultural diversity, using property effectively, efficiently using resources, building unity, open to new expressions, striving for relevance to our community and learning from each other, these are fundamental to our shared future together - renewing our vocation through the ancient truths of our calling.

### *Diocesan and Parish Partnerships*

I want to mention two programs that exemplify this approach. Diocesan and Parish Partnerships and Prevention of Violence Against Women (PVAW) are both important outward-looking initiatives that rely on co-operation and partnership. Both of these initiatives grew out of the meeting I have with CEO's and Chairs of Anglican agencies. We have come to see that even though the Church in the diocese is different in emphasis and skills from the agencies like Brotherhood of St Laurence, Anglicare and Benetas we all share the vocation of 'loving our neighbour' and can bring to the table our own unique contributions. We have many parish communities with an

admirable commitment to *diakonia* or Christian service in the world. The agencies have a highly skilled and highly accountable workforce. To be the best that we can be together takes time, discussion, understanding and a spiritual commitment to *diakonia*. I am grateful for Archdeacon Nick White's leadership of the Parish and Diocesan partnerships and for Robyn Boosey and her work heading up the PVAW work.

The Preventing Violence against Women Program (PVAW) is a partnership between the Diocese of Melbourne, Anglicare Victoria, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Lifeworks, Ansvar and the Melbourne Anglican Foundation. PVAW supports and equips church leaders and communities in the Diocese to address the issue of violence against women and promote gender equality. The Violence Against Women Response and Prevention training program for clergy and lay leaders has received strong support. Over 100 clergy and lay leaders across parishes in Melbourne and Geelong already having completed the training since July, which has been described by participants as "useful, empowering, and exciting".

A one-off grant of \$120,000 from the Department of Premier and Cabinet has been received for PVAW to pilot a whole-church approach to preventing violence against women with five parishes, St Augustine's Moreland, the Parish of Jika Jika, Epiphany Hoppers Crossing, St Mark's Forest Hill and St Thomas' Burwood. This project is being carried out in partnership with The University of Melbourne and the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health. It is hoped that this pilot will provide a basis for further

investment by the State Government in mobilising faith communities to be active in preventing gender based violence.

Anglican Criminal Justice Ministry is a partnership between the Diocese, Anglicare Victoria and the State Government. Victoria's prison population exceeded 8,000 for the first time in 2018. The last decade has seen an enormous rise in the rate of incarceration. As you can imagine our nineteen chaplains are much in demand spending time with prisoners, listening to them, praying with them and caring for them.

Likewise Anglican Hospital Chaplains continue to minister with people in times of suffering and crisis in hospitals across Melbourne and Geelong. Navigating the introduction of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act in Victoria has been a significant challenge for our hospital chaplains this year.

### *The renewal of ministry leadership*

Our annual cohorts of ordinands have continued to number between 18 and 25 year on year. I hope that we can build that up to between 25 and 30 annually and I am glad that Trinity College has invested in building the capacity of the Trinity College Theological School. Four fully funded residential scholarships will give an increase in that pathway for first career ordinands. There has been an impressive renewal of teaching, learning and library facilities at Ridley College this year as well. Between

our two Anglican Colleges and our colleagues at the Chinese department of the Melbourne School of Theology we are well served with a world-class theological education. I have great admiration for the clergy of our diocese, their commitment and their scholarship is impressive. It has been a delight for me to spend afternoons with them in prayer and discussion at the Archdeaconry meetings this year.

We have a robust scheme for selection and training of clergy - two Vocation Days this year with over thirty enquirers, the Year of Discernment, a residential Selection Conference, Theological Education that I have just referred to and several offerings in Post Ordination training. What we need in addition to this is your support in encouraging people whom God may be calling to explore their vocation, the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few! I'm pleased that we are experiencing more candidates aspiring to forms of pioneer ministry as well as seeking to serve in the challenging and lower resourced parishes of the Diocese.

All of the things that I have spoken about are led by one of the bishops of the Diocese. You will hear some more from them and their portfolio responsibilities during the course of the Synod. Bishop Kate Prowd is heading up Church Planting and the Parish Renewal team. Bishop Genieve Blackwell leads the Parish Partnerships and PVAW work. Multicultural ministry is the responsibility of Bishop Paul Barker. Bishop Brad Billings continues his work heading up the people and culture work of the episcopate which involves clergy well-being and of course Theological Education and discernment. I want to acknowledge Bishop Brad's contribution as Governance

Secretary, a responsibility that he carried for two years until he handed it over to Registrar, Michael Urwin in September.

You may remember that I announced at Synod last year the separation of the Registrar role from the General Manager of Business Services/CEO of Melbourne Anglican Diocesan Corporation role. This was completed with Ken Spackman's confirmation in the General Manager and CEO role in April and Michael Urwin's commencement as Registrar in July. You will meet many of the staff from the Diocesan Office over the course of Synod; they will be the people around you ensuring you are signed in and have the things you need. Please make yourself known to them and help make the names and places that they know from the telephone or from emails a friendly memorable face.

I recognise with gratitude the contribution that Deborah Eban has made to the life of this diocese as my Personal Assistant over that past nine years. Deborah will conclude from this work and ministry at the end of the month. Deborah along with my Executive Officer, Ken Hutton give great support to me in my various roles. I wish Deborah every blessing during this time of transition and into the future.

We have a great team of people who are committed to the mission of Christ through his Church in the Diocesan Office, in the Episcopate and amongst the Archdeacons and with you, the ordained and lay leaders of the diocese. We are generously served by the legal officers of the Diocese, the Chancellor, Deputy Chancellor and

Advocate. I was particularly pleased to see that the Australia Day honours this year included a recognition to the Hon Clyde Croft, our Deputy Chancellor and in the Queen's Birthday honours the recognition of Michael Shand our Chancellor. Both awards were as member of the general division of the Order of Australia.

### *Concluding remarks*

Thank you to those present tonight who are attending Synod for the first time. Synod, like all aspects of our life together as God's people can only thrive as it is renewed in each generation. Thank you too for those amongst us who have returned and bring the experience of some or many synods with them. We will be electing members to the Archbishop in Council at this Synod. This is the first synod to do this under new legislative provisions. The former council of the diocese has operated in one form or another in continuous fashion since 1857 and it is important to mark this change. In appreciating all who have served on the Council over the term of the last Synod I particularly want to recognise the contribution of Colin Reilly to the Council, Colin has given 36 years continuous service as lay member. He has also been a member of this Synod since 1975. Many members of our Church serve their parishes, the Synod, mission organisations along with Anglican schools and agencies with similar generous and unwavering commitment. Thank you, we rely on your generous service to achieve great things together.

Let us approach our Synod with the intention of our time together, 'strengthening our tradition, renewing our ethos and modernising our vocation through the ancient truths of our calling', or in Paul's words to Timothy may it be a time for us to grow in the 'spirit of power and love and self-discipline'.

To God be the glory, in the world and the Church, this day and evermore. Amen.