

## MISSIONARY DIOCESE OF TASMANIA

### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS - SYNOD 2006

#### BISHOP JOHN HARROWER

It is just twelve months since we all gathered at the Silverdome here in Launceston to share our stories. Can you recall the forest of Story Towers? Did you marvel at them? I did. The creativity and passion expressed in those Story Towers was fantastic. Can you recall the performing artist on the slack wire? Do you recall your heart thumping with excitement and tension? Do you recall the tears and the joy? The pathos and passion inspire me still.

Our Gathering was passionate. "Passionate Anglicans" - now there's a headline! Praise the Lord! Why all this passion? Because the Gospel of Jesus is a love story: the story of a divine love, a divine passion. The Gospel is passionate business. "*A healthy church . . . transforming life*" expresses my passion for what God has called the Missionary Diocese of Tasmania to be.

This passion fuels five areas of life:

1. How are you **praying**?
2. How are you **growing**?
3. How are you **working with others**?
4. How are you **building your community**?
5. How are you **MAPing**?

#### 1. HOW ARE YOU PRAYING?

Prayer is the mission of the Church. We are a pilgrim people formed by the Pentecostal Spirit to worship God and to perform God's work in the world. The great privilege of participation in the mission of God is carried forward by the Church's dedication and its dependence on God. Prayer is the mark of our dependence on God. Prayer is our heart yearning and communing with the Heart of the universe. The Heart that calls life from death, love from unlove and light from darkness. These themes are not new, coming as they do from our reflection and journey through this recent Lenten season.

Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador grew in his faith to become a defender of the poor and oppressed. He courageously confronted the powerful in defense of the powerless. He was assassinated as he celebrated the Eucharist in 1980. Oscar Romero paid the price for selfless service in mission. Was this dedication, his life, a waste? He wrote a prayer, "THE LONG VIEW", which holds together both the value of our contribution to God's work and our dependence on God, because mission is God's work.

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.  
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,  
it is even beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish in our lifetime  
only a fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.*

*This is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.  
We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities."*

Recently at Beaconsfield a sign called for, "Prayers for the miners", and you may remember little Sophie Delezio's mother calling across to media reporters, "Say a prayer for our little girl".

We can invite people to join with us in prayer. Our Beaconsfield church has had its doors open day and night to offer a place of quiet meditation and prayer for the community. People have gratefully entered into this sacred space; some for the first time in many years. Gathering for prayer is an opportunity for hospitality; a welcome into the presence of God.

That is not new for us. Bishop Phillip Newell's special prayers concerning the Port Arthur killings have been prayed by many people and nurtured many a meditation.

We are to pray for the world in all its needs, joys and sorrows.

Daily prayer, regular prayer both individual and shared is vital to "a healthy *church* . . . transforming *life*". How are you praying?

## 2. HOW ARE YOU GROWING?

The question of how we grow as Christians was at the heart of a recent meeting I had with parents and young people interested in Confirmation. "Believing" and "belonging" are two key aspects of growth in Christ.

"Believing" is of the head and heart.

Believing is of the head, the intellect or mind, in terms of what and how we examine and understand our faith in Christ. Just this month I read the adventure novel "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown. Some of the characters in the novel make quite outrageous and ill-informed comments about how the New Testament was formed, the divinity of Christ and the nature of faith. All of this caused me to refresh my mind by reading and conversation.

Questions about Christian belief can come at a late or an early age.

Bob Witten of the Midlands ARC Project comments, "I have been approached by a man over 70 who challenged my preaching because he said, "You keep referring to other bits of the Bible and I don't have enough framework to hang things on to understand." He has read enthusiastically several Lion Handbook publications and has now requested Confirmation. When others found out - there are now three 'seniors' requesting to be confirmed! They want to be confirmed, to publicly profess their faith in Christ."

Questions about Christian belief also occur at an early age. Bob comments, "On many occasions the children (at the Kempton Festival and the Oatlands' Bullock Festival) riding the donkeys made comments about why a donkey has a cross pattern on its back - "Is that because Jesus died on a cross?" "Did the donkey that carried Jesus know that Jesus was going to die on a cross?" "Did the donkey carry the cross and that gave it the mark?""

Believing is also of the heart and our relationship and experience of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One of our Mission Support Officers was asked to explain the Trinity to a group of young people and had decided to use her own experience of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the discussion group. In preparation for my teaching ministry I am constantly refreshed as I seek to illustrate the great truths of Scripture from my own experience of God and the experience of God's people through the centuries. Earlier this month I spoke on the Theology of Enabler Supported Ministry at the Clergy Conference in the Diocese of Gippsland. I recalled how God had called me into the ordained ministry in Argentina through this ministry model. I grow as I teach, reflect, remember and give thanks to God for his great goodness towards me.

Jacob Yung, Minister of the Hobart Chinese Anglican Church writes,

"Chinese church has two interesting ministries, mission to local Chinese and mission to overseas students. On 30 April, we had one local Chinese and two overseas students baptized, two overseas Chinese were confirmed. The local Chinese lady, Cathy, committed herself to Christ a few years ago. This is the result of long term mission to her family long before I came to Hobart. The previous Chinese worker had contact with Cathy and her family while she started working in this church. After she left, I followed it up and through the moving of God's Spirit she committed herself to Christ at the Bible study. Her mother-in-law became a Christian also, shortly after that, and was baptized before Cathy in 2001. Cathy's husband also committed himself to Christ during Bishop Chung's visit led by Rev. David Cohen last month. We had been ministering to this family for more than 10 years, now we see God's moving Spirit."

Jacob continues, "Mission to the overseas students is a very rewarding ministry. Every year we have new believers with God's grace. Some have never heard the Gospel, some were non-active Christians in their home land. When they came here, they were touched by the Holy Spirit and the love of other Christians here. Then, their life changed. Thank God for giving us this Great Commission to witness to local and overseas Chinese."

I also grow because I belong to the Church, the community of Christians, God's pilgrim people, and in belonging I am encouraged, exhorted and supported by them.

Late last year I had a Ministry Review after five years as your bishop. The Review involved members of the diocese, and beyond, in seeking to help the consultant frame areas of affirmation and areas for development for my ministry. This has assisted my growth as a Christian and as a bishop of the Church. How are you growing?

### 3. HOW ARE YOU WORKING WITH OTHERS?

We are made in love by Love and for love. That is to say, we are made to live in community, with others. The Holy Spirit calls us into the fellowship of Christ, the Body of Christ, the fellowship of the Church.

Alan Bulmer, Rector of Deloraine, writes, "The seven Churches of Deloraine and District have for many years worked together to present the Gospel to this community."

"For over 20 years the Golden Opportunity Shop has sold clothing and household goods cheaply to people in need and the funds raised have assisted many others in financial need. Twelve years ago a shop front called Link Deloraine was established to assist the unemployed, act as advocates for people in financial difficulties, work with youth, work with the police with juvenile offenders during police interviews as well as share out the money raised from the Opportunity Shop."

"The Combined Churches have presented Carols by Candlelight Services for many years. Each year for the past three years they have held an Free Easter Festival on the riverbank and this continues to grow."

"For the last five years all Churches have supported our Chaplain in the High School and two years ago provided a Chaplain to our Aged Hostel and Nursing Home. This has been so successful that the Boards of both homes now share the cost of the Chaplain who is working full-time."

"As the only fulltime clergyperson in Deloraine I have the privilege of leading the Christian Leaders Association and discussions are now being held between at least two of our Churches as to how we can develop Team Lay Leadership (joint or otherwise) in our Churches."

"It is an exciting time for us all."

Andrew Koerbin from Sandford Parish writes:

"The Parishes of Lindisfarne, Bellerive, Howrah and Sandford came together on Easter Sunday to hold an Easter Fun Day to reach out to the Eastern Shore community. Held at Bellerive, passers-by were invited to participate in a

variety of activities. The Parishes of Lindisfarne and Howrah supervised a jumping castle for children, Sandford provided sustenance through 380 free BBQ sausages and Bellerive provided the venue, face painting, hot cross buns and coffee. Free donkey rides were also provided and were so popular they continued 30 minutes past closing time. Of course, the Easter egg hunt proved very popular as well with eggs found in all sorts of interesting places."

"A puppet show was held and over 100 children attended! This was a revelation for the churches who would have nowhere near this number of children between the four of them. It just shows how the community will become involved if the right activity is used, at the right venue and churches demonstrate their willingness to work together. We had over 250-300 people attend some of whom commented that they would try to make an appearance at a church in coming weeks."

"From such humble beginnings, anything is possible. In future years maybe a large event at Wentworth park on Easter Sunday involving lots of churches on the Eastern Shore would be possible - just think a local Christian festival right on our doorstep! Many thanks to those who provided donkey ministry and the puppets to help add that little bit of extra attraction to the event."

Stephen Carnaby, Rector of Bellerive, adds, "the Bellerive parishioners were excited by seeing large numbers of children present, and are ready now to take some further steps in outreach."

I work closely with the Bishop's Executive Committee, the Mission Support Officers, the staff at Church House and with you throughout Tasmania.

I take this opportunity to thank the Diocesan staff team of Sandra Fagan, my Personal Assistant; the Registry team headed up by the excellent Russell Morton, Registrar, with Lesley Metcalfe, Ray Phillips, Max Andrews, Arianne Woolley and Trish Smith. The work of our Diocesan Mission Enabler, Paul Cavanough, is outstanding and most ably supported by Rebecca Kuipers. The blessings continue with Les Whittle our Director of Professional Standards, Helen Phillips, Safe Ministry Officer and Children's and Family Ministry, and also "Mr Nostalia Now", Bruce Geeves.

The Mission Support Officers play a vital role in the Missionary Diocese of Tasmania and I am indebted to them for their commitment. Thank you to Peter Adkins, Andrew Lake, Bob McKay, Helen Phillips, Ross Nicholson, Lindsay Stoddart and Neil Vearing. To those who serve on the councils of the Church, I thank you. In particular, John Phillips, Chair of the Diocesan Ministry Council, Peter Johnston, Chair of Anglican Chaplaincy Tasmania. My thanks also go to the Chancellor, Audrey Mills, the Diocesan Advocate, Craig Doherty, Diocesan Treasurer Michael Whitehouse and his predecessor, Peter Blyth, my Chaplain, Charles Fehre and our Media Officer and Convenor of the new look Tasmanian Anglican Editorial Panel, Stephen Carnaby, and the Production Editor, Sheelagh Wegman.

The Bishop's Executive Committee meets weekly and makes many of the ongoing decisions that are shaping our worship, ministry and mission. I am grateful beyond measure to the Vicar General, Chris Jones, Registrar, Russell Morton, Diocesan Mission Enabler, Paul Cavanough, and the Dean, Lindsay Stoddart, for their commitment to this Diocese.

Like the apostle Paul writing his letters, I barely begin to acknowledge people when I realize there is neither time nor space to acknowledge everybody. In closing my acknowledgements too soon, I look at you, the members of this Synod, and I see people who are key contributors to God's work in this State and I thank God for you. Thank you.

In weekly meetings with the Registrar, Diocesan Mission Enabler, Vicar General and Dean, we seek to bring broad gifts and perspectives to the life of the Diocese. A three day intensive consultancy mid 2005 has also contributed to my growth in understanding of my ministry, of my person and of the way I work.

The Anglican agencies and schools meet with me regularly to keep ourselves informed and encouraged by each others ministries. I can assure you that the CEOs are dedicated and highly competent in an increasingly demanding and complex society. Just last Saturday at Campbell Town I joined in a Retreat Day led by Andrew Lake, Mission Support Officer, for the School Principals, Chaplains and senior staff. I am grateful to my Educational Advisor, Tom Wallace, for his assistance in this ministry.

Building personal relationships is a key to building a healthy church. One of the ways in which I seek to do this is through my annual "Bishop's Day" at our Anglican schools. I quote from the Chaplain's letter to parents commenting on my most recent school visit.

"(H)ighlights of the day included grade 6 and grade 10 forums in which students entered into dialogue with Bishop John about a range of spiritual issues. Topics ranged from heaven, hell, donkeys, baptism, who made God, the Trinity, clerical dress and what's the Bishop's day job? . . .

The Bishop's annual visit reminds the Grammar community of its continuing link with the Anglican Church and the schools Christian foundation, heritage and ongoing ministry where we seek to educate holistically the mind, body and spirit of those entrusted to our care."

In August I will be visiting the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council (NATSIAC) in Brisbane to hear from them of their role and relationship with the Anglican Church in Australia. Members of Standing Committee requested me carry out this task, in part, because of my training and experience in cross cultural ministry. How are we working with others?

#### 4. HOW ARE YOU BUILDING YOUR COMMUNITY?

Anglicans in Tasmania are active in community groups. A leading Anglican, Barry Easter, has shown outstanding leadership as Mayor of the West Tamar, in the midst of the mining tragedy and rescue at Beaconsfield. The parishioners with their priest, Chris Thiele, continue to exercise sensitive and significant ministry with affected families and friends.

At Queenstown, a local Councillor speaking on behalf of the Municipality of the West Coast, congratulated the newly commissioned Local Ministry Support Team with these words, "At a time when many services are being withdrawn from the West Coast and in many areas the community is in decline, it's good to see the Church continuing on. I thank the Anglican Church for your commitment to the West Coast." What a fantastic affirmation of our brothers and sisters and the wider diocesan family in supporting them.

Hope Van Acker of Queenstown is encouraged because since the establishment of the Enabler Supported Ministry on the West Coast they have a prayer group going with 7 people and the Bible study group has grown from 4 to 7. Hope comments that these are small numbers compared to bigger parishes but things are happening on the West Coast and she thanks God for it.

Colina Bailey, Deacon at Strahan, tells the story of needing a hall to be built for no more that \$60,000 and when all the quotes were way over their budget, a builder came in with a quote for \$57,000. They now have money for paint and furnishings. Praise the Lord! with the West Coasters!

Ten years ago at St David's Port Arthur the Anglican community was arriving for worship when people began running up towards them from the café. Their worship that day was expressed in caring for victims of the tragedy. Their loving service has continued through the following years. Worshipping with them on the Sunday prior to the Ten Year Commemorative Service was a very moving experience. Following worship we walked down to the memorial and spent some time there. It was a solemn occasion. Yet, grace continues to break through into our lives. On the way down the parishioners commented on the beautiful autumn leaves and at the memorial one of the parishioners exclaimed, "Look, there is a rainbow reflected in the pool (of remembrance)! God is with us, even in this."

I carried this in my heart and on the eve of the 10th anniversary I wrote:

## April is Autumn and Rainbow at Port Arthur

It's Autumn in April.  
The colours are beautiful.  
The leaves die.  
The leaves fall.

It rains.  
It's cold.  
It's dark.  
It's Winter at Port Arthur.

It's Spring in September.  
The colours are beautiful.  
The leaves live.  
The leaves grow.

It rains.  
It's hot.  
It's light.  
It's Summer at Port Arthur.

It's Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer.  
It's ten years at Port Arthur.  
It's ten years after.  
It's ten years on.

It's time for hope.

There's a rainbow at Port Arthur.  
See,  
It's reflected in the pond,  
    The pond of memory.

There's a rainbow at Port Arthur.  
See,  
It's reflected in the people,  
    The people of memory.

There's a rainbow at Port Arthur.  
See,  
It's reflected in the promise,  
    The promise of hope.

There's a rainbow of God's promise.  
See,  
It's reflected in the Easter,  
    The EasterGod of hope.

As God's "Easter people" we serve the community in many ways.

Prison Chaplain Charles Whitton comments, "I count it a joy and an honour to minister to the poor and marginalised who find themselves in prison doing a custodial sentence. I'm mindful of what Jesus shares with his own in the great parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew Chapter 25, "When I was in prison you came to me", and Luke who records in Chapter 4:18-20 the mission statement of the Messiah who comes to "set the captive free"."

"Prison is often a dark and miserable experience for incarcerated people. It is also a potential catalyst for change and inner transformation. As Chaplain to Tasmania's 500 prisoners, when a person begins to grow and change, the experience is heightened as light shines more profoundly and powerfully in the darkness."

"Since I've been full-time at Risdon, I've baptised many prisoners. I've given them the sacrament of the Eucharist, many for the first time, I've anointed them with oil, married them, buried them. And in all of this I see the face of the suffering Christ who longs for us to reach out to him in the least, the poor, the broken and the vulnerable."

Charles asks us to: "Please keep prisoners, staff at the prison facilities and the Chaplaincy team in your prayers. I hope this might encourage others to see the Church's mission as being broader than the parish."

At a national conference on education I took the opportunity to encourage schools to help their students to constructively meet with groups who hold religious convictions. I believe we are to work for a healthy society in which difference is respected and Christians are to continue to be life, light and love to the communities in which God has placed us. Segregation, isolation and extremism will neither build a stable society nor the Kingdom of God.

Anzac Day cooperation with the local community in remembrance activities is another effective way in which Anglicans help build their communities.

The Parish of St Helens writes, "At St Helens the RSL has ordered the Anglican donkey ministry "for ever and ever and ever" in their words. The children love it too - about 30 rides after the Anzac Service this year and last year. They certainly add very much to the celebrations.

I wear a white wrist band as a reminder of the fight against world poverty. I am a member of the Panel of Reference for Micah Challenge. The wristband creates opportunities to discuss world poverty through its challenge, "make poverty history".

These are some of the ways in which we seek to build our community.

How are you building your community?

## 5. HOW ARE YOU "MAPing"?

MAP, "Mission Action Plans", is a tool to help your parish or agency plan its mission. Anglicare kindly provided this "Mission Action Plans" folder to each parish. Last year at the Diocesan Ministry Conference, our guest speaker, Stuart Robinson of the Church Army spoke about "Mission Action Plans."

We are a Diocese-at-mission and our hopes and dreams are focused on God and God's purposes. Our Lord delights to work through his people - to the point where St. Paul can say to the Ephesian church, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10, NIV).

Confidence in God is our foundation as we seek to bring our vision into reality. "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34, NIV). It's our food too.

The Mission Action Plan material makes it clear where to begin. *"Intentional ministry is rooted in a spiritual readiness for ministry"*, it so rightly says, *"This has two dimensions: passion and prayer."* (MAP, page 23). It is my firm belief that God has enlivened us with passion for the Gospel. It is seen in individual Anglicans, congregations, parishes and Diocesan teams. Likewise, there are more and more prayerful activists in our ranks.

At last year's Synod, we celebrated "Gathering Momentum" at Launceston's Silverdome using the "Story Towers". Each parish and agency was to undertake "one new thing". Have you undertaken "one new thing"? How have you progressed?

How are you "MAPing"?

### HOW IS MY EPISCOPAL "MAPing"?

With my leadership team, I have developed a detailed Mission Action Plan for my ministry that will continue to build upon the "ahealthychurch . . . transforming/life" vision for our diocese. The Mission Action Plan will be just that, a map to mark specific and intentional ways forward. Without boring the Synod with the details, I take the opportunity to highlight five key areas:

1. Missionary disciples are at prayer and to this end my MAP has a significant focus on prayer during Lent 2007.
2. My MAP will have a focus on equipping churches for mission and evangelism. One way I will do this is to release a small group Bible study guide, "Transforming Life". We continue to need new passion, new energy, new life.

3. Analysis and Implementation of the Review of the Enabler Supported Ministry model with particular emphasis on 'leadership for mission' in this model. (2006)
4. Maintain an active interest in the industrial relations Workchoices legislation (2006-07).
5. Development and Presentation of "Understanding our Muslim Neighbours" workshops in Launceston, Hobart and Burnie (second half of 2006).

We may well ask the question: Why understand Muslims?  
I can think of four reasons:

- Jesus commands us to love our neighbours as ourselves. Love entails understanding and sensitive engagement.
- The Light of the world is not to be hidden but to be shared: sharing is effective when hearts and minds are open in love.
- Pragmatically, we live in a multi-faith society and world. Understanding is a vital key to our building on shared values, respect of differences and a commitment to our common life.
- Islam is in the news.

A failure to try to understand one another can at worst lead to an exaggeration of perceived differences and hostility; ignoring differences risks giving offence and shows a lack of hospitality. The workshop will provide opportunity for participants to learn something of Islam and similarity and difference with Christian faith.

I call on others to work to get a greater understanding between Christians and Muslims living together in Tasmania.

### AND SO TO PRAYER

In prayer we align ourselves to the purposes of God. In prayer we become God's workmanship, not our own self-made creations. When we pray "your will be done" we are embracing both surrender and deliberate action - for this is not a prayer of ignorance, but a prayer of eyes-open faith: Whatever the cost, wherever it takes us, Lord, may your plans, your dreams, your intentions, become reality.

As we deliberate on the MAP God has for us, our prayer (*APBA pages 210-211*) is this:

*Christ, whose insistent call  
disturbs our settled lives:  
give us discernment to hear your word,  
grace to relinquish our tasks,  
and courage to follow empty-handed  
wherever you may lead,  
so that the voice of your gospel  
may reach to the ends of the earth. Amen.*

John Harrower  
Bishop of Tasmania 27 May 2006

---

## DISCUSSION STARTERS FOR SMALL GROUPS

- A. Going around the group, what is each person's five second response to the Bishop's Synod Address?
  
- B. What is occurring in these five areas of your own or your parish's, agency's or school's life:
  - 1. How are you praying?
  - 2. How are you growing?
  - 3. How are you working with others?
  - 4. How are you building your community?
  - 5. How are you "MAPing"?
  
- C. What are your comments on the Bishop's "MAPing" and the five key areas (pages 10 and 11)?