

**Bishop's Charge to Synod  
Diocese of Nelson  
August 2011**



Just before I begin my charge to Synod, I would like to make a few personal acknowledgements:

First I would like to welcome Bishop Sam and Rosemary Sahu to our Diocese. Sam is the Bishop of Malaita in the Solomon Islands and it is my hope that we can build a new companion relationship of support and encouragement between our two Dioceses. The parish of Blenheim has had a relationship with the village of Fourau that goes back several years and have a team that has just returned in the last few days. Bishop Sam studied at St John's College but then went on to more study at Trinity College. He shares our passion for an evangelical faith. So it is a privilege to have him and Rosemary with us.

Secondly, since our last Synod we witnessed the terrible series of explosions at the Pike River Mine in the Mawhera Deanery that claimed 29 lives. There isn't a parish on the Coast that wasn't affected to some extent or another. And yet we were sincerely moved – and dare I say, proud – at the witness of our church as both lay and clergy responded so powerfully and publicly to everyone; from the media who poured into Greymouth, to the police and other rescue groups, to the grieving families themselves. The greetings and the love of this Synod continues to be with the people and clergy of Mawhera.

Thirdly, I want to welcome Dean Nick Kirk to his first Synod in the Diocese and to pledge to him my support. Already we have had a combined meeting of Chapter and Vestry to explore a new governance structure that reflects our unity as a Diocese and Cathedral. Once the nuts and bolts of this new structure have been affirmed by the Cathedral parishioners, we hope to trial this new initiative in the lead up to next year's Synod.

It's also a joy to welcome Reverends Debbie and Andrew Smith to this Synod. Debbie has already established a strong presence at the hospital and I am absolutely certain she is going to have a very powerful ministry there. It's a privilege to have them both here in Nelson and we welcome you.

I want to also take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to Eric Sears who has indicated his intention to retire from his ministry early next year. Eric moved from Havelock in the Sounds to take up a new ministry of Elder Care within Nelson. To see Eric in action at Whareama with his guitar in hand is to recognise the love that this man has and the depth of his faith. I would like this Synod to recognise his contribution, knowing that he will be just as committed into his retirement.

This is also a chance to congratulate Tim Harris on his appointment as Bishop in Adelaide with special responsibility for mission and evangelism. Tim, Fiona and Jon arrived here at the beginning of my second year as Bishop and I guess, in a very real way, we have

formed each other. Bishopdale College is so strong today because of Tim's vision and his leadership. We will miss them, but know that strong links have been made that will continue.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge John and Dawn Stringer who will be retiring from ministry at the end of the year and will be moving from Reefton to live in Christchurch. I had the privilege of working with John and Dawn when they first moved from Christchurch to Blenheim. I was thrilled for them when Bishop Derek came and asked them if they would accept the position in Reefton, knowing that it would not come with a full stipend. And they accepted without hesitation. They are an epitome for me of a servant ministry, and that has been strongly recognised within the parish of the Grey Valley. They have been accepted within the community – which takes time. And just at the point when their ministry is beginning to bear real fruit, health concerns have meant they feel it is time to move. Again, I would like this Synod to recognise their ministry.

Let me tell you a tale of two churches.

The first sermon preached in New Zealand took place on Christmas day 1814 in Oihi, in the Bay of Islands. The CMS missionary, Samuel Marsden took as his text Luke 2:10 *'Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy that will be for all people.'* He came at the invitation of Ruatara, the chief of Nga Puhi whom he had met in Port Jackson – Sydney.

Ruatara and the Nga Puhi people gave Marsden land to build a mission station at Rangihoua and Ruatara and his Uncle Hongi Hika, who succeeded him as chief, offered these first Christian missionaries their protection. It was a pretty tough beginning. Despite their deep love and respect for the Maori people – they didn't have one single convert for 16 years, but the mission was established. It wasn't until the next wave of CMS missionaries (including Henry Williams and Octavius Hadfield) that Christianity began to flourish and spread among the Maori people.

This quote comes from an article by Duncan Roper that appeared in the 2011 New Vision Handbook:

*'The basic thrust of mission policy prior to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi was one that was evangelistic but otherwise culturally supportive of Maori interests in respect of language, land and social structure.'*<sup>1</sup>

It's pretty clear that Christianity grew through the teaching and preaching of these early missionaries and the evangelistic journeys of some of their new converts.

One such convert took the name of Abraham at his baptism by Bishop Selwyn after having given his life to Christ following his dramatic healing from serious illness - the day before - during Selwyn's visit to Motueka. Aperahama Te Mate Mate then took the Christian Gospel to Te Tai Poutini – Westland. By the time the first Europeans had set foot over there, the whole of the Maori population in Westland had embraced Christianity. In fact when Brunner and Heaphy were setting out on the first European exploration of the West

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<sup>1</sup> The British Missionary Effort in New Zealand: A Beachhead for Colonialism? Dr Duncan Roper New Vision New Zealand Vol IV (2011) MissionKoru 2011

Coast they met Aperahama, just south of the Ngakawau River, on his way back over to Nelson, so that his son and daughter could be baptised by the Anglican missionaries there. This was without any doubt a missional church.

Then there was another church beginning to spring up throughout the 1840's. It came alongside the waves of settlers that were coming in to Aotearoa / New Zealand from Britain. The growth of this church was strongly encouraged by the New Zealand Company who were of course responsible for so much of the illegal and immoral acquisition of land.

The following note appeared in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Report of the Company in 1847:

*'The aim of this company is not confined to mere emigration. It's object is to transplant English Society... our laws, our customs, associations, habits, manners, feelings, everything of England, in short, but the soil.'*

This church spread throughout New Zealand and wherever a community of settlers became established, a church would be built and a clergyman installed to attend to the spiritual needs of the settlers; to preach on Sunday; baptise, marry and bury. The English Parish structure was embraced and new Dioceses were formed. In the years following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and the subsequent Maori Land Wars, this church became the dominant expression of Anglicanism in New Zealand. It was a settler church.

I'm spending quite a bit of time telling this story for a reason. Peter Lineham, the Associate Professor of History and Head of the School of Social and Cultural Studies at Massey University, presented a paper to this year's Christian Network Congress, entitled '200 years of Challenges to the Gospel in New Zealand.' Dr Lineham did an in depth study of the 2006 census figures which showed that the overall proportion of the population calling itself Christian had shrunk to 52%.

But he went one step further and looked at regional variations – where were the figures strongest and where were they weakest? And he discovered something quite revealing. In the areas where the missional church had been strong - in the more traditional Maori settlements such as Wairoa and Gisborne, the percentage of the population defining themselves as Christian was still relatively high: 72% in Wairoa and 67% in Gisborne.

Conversely, in those places where the settler church had become established, the percentage of the population calling themselves Christian was markedly lower: 47% in Tasman and 46% in Nelson - the lowest in New Zealand.

This presents us with a challenge because we, as a Diocese, have inherited the forms, practices and structures of the settler church. And, although we consider ourselves to be evangelical – we find it hard to be consistently evangelistic because so much of our time and resources are spent *maintaining* the structure.

One Vicar from within our Diocese commented last year that the money they had just raised to repaint the old church would have paid for a youth leader for two years. Maintenance is not a barrier to mission – it's the opposite of it!

So we've got some decisions to make.

- And the first one is really simple. Are we serious about being a missional church or would we rather preserve the status quo that is warm and familiar?
- And secondly, do the structures we have inherited (both physical structures and management structures) inhibit or encourage our mission?

Every one of my Synod charges since becoming Bishop, either in whole or in part, has touched on this theme and I guess I'll continue to do so until we begin to make the paradigm shift – because that's what it is – it's a different way of thinking about, and being, church.

Throughout Bishop Derek's ministry here we confirmed our identity as an evangelical Diocese; we are passionate about the centrality of scripture. My dream is that we *also* become an 'evangelistic' Diocese – or to use a more contemporary term – a 'missional' Diocese.

Let me fly a kite and suggest some of the changes that we might work toward over the next three or four years, as a way of making this paradigm shift. They are broad and, as much as I would have liked to, there is very little detail included because I am deliberately casting a vision rather than presenting a 'fait accompli'.

1. That the 26 parishes, that we have at present, **while retaining their unique identity**, begin the process of merging (or clustering together) to form 10 mission districts with a common mission action plan.

This is not, and will not be, some sort of forced amalgamation. Economic considerations might hasten the process in some areas and in other areas a parish vacancy might provide the momentum to 'look outside the square' as they consider future ministry. Still others might begin conversations with neighbours in order to facilitate new ministries. The development of shared Elder Care ministries has seen this cooperation already beginning to happen.

2. That the loneliness of the solo ministry unit be replaced by the strength and support of a team ministry.
3. Within these mission districts new expressions of church will be planted.
4. To revisit the whole concept of a cell-based church as the essential building block of a missional community.
5. The Diocesan Ministry Team will no longer function from a central office but will exercise their ministry from within one of these mission districts; including the ministry of the Bishop!
6. Synod will begin to have a missional focus rather than a structural one.

It's a challenging call – but not a unique one. There are many other Dioceses across the Anglican Church that are moving in a similar direction. But it might be unique, and therefore rather daunting, to us here in Aotearoa / New Zealand.

I'd like to quickly describe three characteristics of a missional church:

Firstly, it will always be a serving church.

It will always be looking for new ways of reaching out into the local community; responding to the needs of that community. And for no other reason except to build relationship because relationship is the seed-bed of mission. In the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman that I referred to last evening, Jesus didn't introduce himself until a rapport had been established – it all began with the request for a drink of water.

Secondly, a missional church will always be a witnessing church.

There used to be a saying in church growth circles that 'new Christians make new Christians.' Last night I briefly reflected on the Samaritan woman who had just experienced the redeeming grace of Jesus and the first thing she did was leave her water jar and head back into town and tell people of her experience and encourage them to come and see Jesus themselves. This wasn't some five-fold strategy for evangelism that she was following or some covert plan to convince others they should accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. When and how did we lose the confidence and courage to share our own stories, simply and transparently?

Thirdly, a missional church will always be a confessional church.

In the wake of all the changes that the Anglican Communion is experiencing it is important to note that at the heart of our faith is the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. If we lose that, then we have lost our mission.

Early last year, at the launch of the Institute of New Anglicanism – that dimension of Bishopdale Theological College that prepares people for the Church of tomorrow - I shared the following table that looked at the new paradigm for ministry within a missional framework. It is not original – it came from Bob Jackson in his book 'The Road to Growth' – where he lists the following skills that future clergy and lay people will need:

*Clergy that are:*

Leaders in mission	more than	Pastors to the flock
Church planters	more than	Church curators
Missionaries	more than	Chaplains
Pioneers	more than	Settlers
Entrepreneurs	more than	Conformists
Managers of change	more than	Rocks of stability
Enablers of other's ministries	rather than	The corks in the bottle
Leaders of specialist teams	rather than	Multi-competent dog-collars
Inspirers of growth	rather than	Managers of decline
Counter-culture leaders	rather than	Establishment figures

*Church Communities that are:*

Pioneering fresh expressions	rather than	Maintaining existing forms
Prepared to take risks	rather than	Playing it safe
Relationship centred	rather than	Building centred
Working together	rather than	A group of independent operators
Authentic adverts of Jesus	rather than	Moral and authority figures of the State

So, the first two challenges that I alluded to last evening in my Synod sermon: the challenge of structure and of mission. The two are so closely related I couldn't separate them this morning. Jesus challenged the spiritual paradigm of this Samaritan woman who thought that faith was all tied up in a place and in forms of worship – on Mount Gerazim or in Jerusalem. Jesus didn't just touch up and re-hang the painting – he started with a whole new canvas.

**My charge to Synod is:**

- To encourage and appoint a Standing Committee who can begin to plan and dream how we might progress on this transforming journey.
- To take this challenge back to our parishes and begin an audit of our parish life looking at those things that encourage our mission and those things that inhibit it.
- Begin to build relationships with neighbouring parishes, talking about common dreams and vision and looking for opportunities to share the differing gifts of ministry.

The third challenge that I mentioned last evening has to do with worship. Although there are some very special things happening all around the Diocese, I get a sense at times that, in our worship, we are spiritually tired. Or, as I said last evening, *'I get the impression that we are simply 'marking time' spiritually'*.

We do fellowship well, but there isn't a sense of anticipation of what God might do during our corporate times of worship. We seem to come to worship with low expectations and therefore we are not disappointed. But neither are we changed. Sometimes I wonder if we are a little like the church of Ephesus in the book of Revelation who were challenged with having lost their 'first love'.

We do fellowship well – although sometimes we are not so good at the welcoming or incorporation of newcomers – but somewhere down the track we have lost our sense of awe and wonder at who God is and what he intends for us, his children.

In our Gospel reading last evening, Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman about 'true worshippers' who would worship 'in the Spirit and in truth.' The lack of any common interpretation on this passage in commentaries shows how carefully we need to approach it. But I do remember how vibrant our worship was here in this Diocese in the mid 90's when there was a balance of biblical exposition *and* an openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Incidentally this was also the time of our fastest growth as a Diocese.

I come down on the side of those commentators who see this balance of word and Spirit reflected in this passage and again I want to repeat something I said last night: *'my hope that our worship would be 'Bible centred', and therefore Christ-centred, for he is the heart of the biblical writings, the truth embodied; and at the same time 'Spirit-empowered' because this is where we experience the truth revealed.'*

I believe that balance is expressed in Paul's letter to the Ephesians when he prays that *'The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.'*

I know that I don't need to stand here and make a case for biblical preaching in this Diocese. Our annual school of preaching is an example of our commitment to continue to grow in this area. But I do want to spend a few moments of Synod's time acknowledging the ministry of John Stott who has been the towering figure of evangelical Anglicanism during the second part of last century and the first years of this century.

I'd like to play a short video by way of tribute.....

But what about the Spirit in our worship? John Stott actually had something to say about 'spiritual worship' in his book 'The Living Church'.

He wrote: *'What is needed then? Firstly we need such a faithful reading and preaching of God's word that through it his living voice is heard addressing his people again. Secondly we need a reverent and expectant administration of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper that (I choose my words carefully) there is a real presence of Jesus Christ... not in the elements but among his people... so that we may feed on him in our hearts by faith. Thirdly, we need such a sincere offering of praise and prayer, that God's people say with Jacob 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it' (Genesis 28:16) and unbelievers fall down and worship God exclaiming 'God is really among you.' (1 Corinthians 14:24-25)*

'In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Spurgeon spoke of 'spirit and truth' as 'fire and light.' *'In the pulpit' he said 'there must be light as well as fire. Some preachers are all light and no fire, while others are all fire and no light. What we need is both fire and light.'*

I believe that the 'Spirit' that Jesus refers to in his conversation with the Samaritan woman is the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. And that this is the Spirit that brings fire to our preaching; expectancy to our prayers; freedom to our liturgy; commitment to our fellowship; transparency to our lives; confidence to our doubts; strength to our weakness; focus to our ministry; power to our praise; joy to our worship and peace to our souls.

Doesn't sound very Anglican does it? And yet I suspect that there would be very few in this Synod who would not want to see their parishes alive and vibrant rather than going through the motions week after week. This is a Diocese that knows the answer. It's found in the power of prayer and in the reclaiming of 'the first love'.

So, my final charge to this Synod is that we reaffirm the power of biblical preaching and teaching and reclaim the renewing power of the Holy Spirit within the life of our Diocese and our parishes.

- That we throw all our support behind the resurgence festival early next year (and I'm thrilled Mike Pilavachi will be keynote speaker at that festival).
- That we establish intercessors throughout the whole Diocese who are committed to praying for the Diocese.
- That we continue to embrace the relationship (across the Diocese) with New Wine New Zealand as a vehicle for renewal and refreshment.
- That we recommit ourselves as a people of prayer.

And may God be glorified in our midst.

+Richard