

## **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

### **Second Session of the Thirty-Third Triennium**

#### **Welcome**

Welcome to the Second Session of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Triennium of the Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia in the Diocese of Willochra. This is my tenth Presidential address to the Synod of this diocese, and I want to begin by giving thanks to God and to you the people of the diocese, for giving me the immense privilege of serving as your Bishop. It remains true that I am still surprised sometimes when I see myself dressed in Episcopal robes reflected in a church window or door.

#### **Seasons**

The psalms are a constant source of delight and encouragement for me. Somehow the psalm readings at Evening Prayer nearly always have something to say of direct relevance to the issues of my life earlier on that day! Whether the psalm is one of exultant praise, or deep longing for God, of celebration and joy, or frustration and disappointment, the words of the psalmist to God, nearly always become God's direct address to me.

Walter Bruggemann, one of the finest living Old Testament scholars, has a simple framework for categorising the Psalms. Some are psalms of Integration, celebrating all that is good and strong in

life. These psalms speak to us powerfully when life is sweet and hopeful. Psalm of Disintegration, on the other hand, express great distress that things seem to be falling apart, God appears to have left the scene, and everything looks dark. Third, psalms of Reintegration celebrate God's renewing power, bringing new possibilities and growth from the midst of pain and the struggle to be faithful. As we rehearse the psalms, we experience time and time again these three "seasons" of life, and are confronted by our own provisionality. We never quite get our act together enough to abandon the psalms.

The psalmist expresses the deepest realities of our experience. Sometimes we are full of joy and hope. Sometimes lamentation and anger are our song, and sometimes we are true Easter people, celebrating renewal and fresh beginnings. This pattern of integration, disintegration and reintegration is familiar to us all, because it is the pattern of our lives. It is the pattern we see at the heart of the story of our redemption. The apparently integrated lives of Jesus and the disciples totally disintegrate on the first Good Friday, and the encounters with the Risen Lord are the beginning a spectacular reintegration of the lives of Mary of Magdala and Peter and the others, so that they become agents of the new emerging Kingdom of God. But the story is not finished. The new Creation has not yet come to fulfilment. We see the great temptation to think we have

finally made it, that we have at last got our act together, in the Gospels.

- In the exuberant explosion from Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration we see the temptation to hang on to what appears to be integration, to settle and enjoy what is: *Let us build three booths here*. Jesus leads them down the mountain to disintegration.
- Judas is so stuck in lament that he gives in to the darkness and takes his own life.
- Even after they have encountered the Risen Lord, the disciples huddle together in the upper room, uncertain how to make sense of the stories of the women and the men from the Emmaus road, longing to believe that there is a new beginning, but not sure about what comes next.

The truth is that we never get our act together. The first Christians only become real saints when they stop worrying about where and what they are and accept the provisionality of their lives and their utter dependence on God's grace. *It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*

The familiar pattern of integration, disintegration and reintegration goes on and on, like the carousel in Joni Mitchell's song, The Circle Game: *The painted ponies go up and down*. Our lives are endlessly seasonal. Just when we think we have got our act together, sickness, or a sudden loss, or spectacular failure brings our integrated world tumbling down and we wait for the rebuilding to begin.

We should be used to this pattern. We ought not to be seduced by the temptation to stay where we are safe and secure, insulated in our seemingly integrated world. But most of us move to that place as our default way of living. Some people are even tempted to cling to sadness or failure, because at least the place of lament is familiar territory. Some Christians get stuck in their first serious experience of God and never move on for fear of change. The Risen Jesus invites us to a much less comfortable place, where renewal is the norm, where things never stay the same, where provisionality is a way of life not a season to be endured, where all things are possible and nothing is in our control. This is the conversion experience that we all need again and again.

As we gather this year to look over our life together in this diocese, may we experience again the stirrings of God's Holy Spirit inviting us to embrace the seasonal changes of our lives as individuals , as congregations and as a diocese with hope and energy, confident that there is always more ministry ahead, more brokenness to tend, more hope to nurture and more love to give and to receive.

### **Centenary Celebrations**

Our diocese was created from the Diocese of Adelaide in 1915 and Bishop Gilbert White, the first Bishop, was enthroned at Port Pirie on 28<sup>th</sup>

July 1915. This means that our centenary celebrations are just 5 years away, and the Diocesan Council has had a preliminary discussion about how we might give thanks for 100 years of mission and ministry as a diocese. Whatever we do to celebrate, I hope that it will be possible for us to give some substantial assistance to an emerging diocese in our region as part of our thank offering. Although our diocese is small and we often feel under great financial stress, God has always provided what we have needed and so our centenary will be a great opportunity to help another group of Anglican Christians establish their common life and faithful witness. Over the coming years a small planning group will begin its work: if you have interests or skills that you would like to offer, please speak to me or a member of the Diocesan Council.

### **Financial Matters**

Money is always an issue in the Church, but we should not be surprised – it is an issue for nearly all of us in our daily lives. We have been well served in past years by the good work of Registrars, Diocesan Treasurers and finance committees who have carefully husbanded our small capital base and so provided additional income to supplement ministry initiatives and to support struggling communities.

We rely on a substantial grant from the Leigh Trust (nearly \$100,000 in 2010) to supplement our diocesan finances, and I want to place on record

our gratitude to the members of the Leigh Trust for their commitment to growing the capital base of the Trust while still making grants that increase beyond the rate of inflation each year. In particular I wish to thank our nominee to the Trust, Mr Mark Pickhaver, who serves as Chairman of the Trust and who has been steadfast in protecting the interests of the rural beneficiaries of the Trust. As well, the strong support of BCA enables ministries that would otherwise not be possible in the remote north of the diocese. Negotiations with BCA are taking place to explore funding a further ministry to the remote mining communities in the far North on a flyIn/flyOut model. Peter Palmer has been instrumental in this planning.

The National Home Mission Fund, sometimes called the Outback Fund supports some of the costs of the MDO, and through the NHMF, the parish of St James, King Street, in Sydney supports the Ministry in Spirituality and the Gawler Ranges Ministry. Smaller gifts come from other supportive parishes.

Our Treasurer will outline to you why we believe it is appropriate this year to operate with a substantial deficit budget in the Home Mission Fund. We do not anticipate that this will be a recurring situation, indeed the capital would soon be exhausted if we relied on running a deficit budget. Nevertheless, I would encourage you to suggest that your congregations make an additional gift to the Home Mission Fund if it is at all possible.

I am grateful to God for the generosity and careful management of our financial resources at every level of our diocese. Our support for mission beyond the diocese is good, and there are many little projects, like school Christian pastoral support worker funding that go on in our local communities. However it is vital that we all take seriously the personal stewardship and generous giving that sustains the life of our local churches. We cannot expect to rely on others to support our own churches or to fund local mission, and so our giving needs to be regular, generous and sacrificial. I am pleased that several congregations help parishioners in their giving by offering regular electronic giving facilities.

### **The Community of St Barnabas and St Cecilia**

There are currently 13 members who have made the commitment of Annual Vows to live as members of the Community. There is one novice and several people support the Community and share its life of prayer and service as Friends and associates. I suspect this means that they are the fastest growing religious community in Australia! Canon Bill Goodes serves as the chaplain to the Community and offers spiritual advice as well as practical wisdom to individual members and to the Chapter. At present the Community House is at Peterborough, in the old Rectory, although most members are living as “dispersed”, i.e. in their own homes. As Visitor, I have one formal meeting with

the Community members each year, and I also try to meet with them at another of their Chapter meetings or at their annual retreat. One of the things I most admire about the Community is that it is always, “in process” and always open to new directions and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since its foundation some 14 years ago the Community has received a grant from the Home Mission Fund. The Diocesan Council believes that the Community is now strong enough to be financially independent and so the grant from diocesan funds to support the Community will decrease by half each year over the next three years. This will free some funds to help seed-fund new initiatives.

## **Worship**

As I visit churches around the Diocese I am usually delighted by the warmth of welcome and the standard of worship. Of course, I wonder what happens on an “ordinary” Sunday, when the Bishop is not visiting, and I want to encourage lay leaders and the clergy to be creative and experimental with worship. In some places, like Port Augusta and Balaklava, Sunday evening services, loosely Evensong, often with a very creative musical component have been successful in attracting new worshippers. In the Copper Coast a variety of “Fresh Expressions” like the All Sorts congregation meeting on Tuesdays in a local veterans hall, and local aged care facility worship, is planned to be innovative, engaging and celebratory. We are an “ordered” Church, but it is important that we do not become prisoners of the Prayer Book, just as some of our non-conformist church colleagues can become prisoners of the hymn-

sandwich way of worshipping. A Prayer Book for Australia is a rich resource for worship and offers an enormous amount of flexibility, and yet often the only worn out parts of the books begin on page 119 and end at page 144.

Planning is always the key to engaging liturgy, whether it is creative and fresh or a familiar and well prepared service of Holy Communion. And planning is always done best by a small group. If you have to plan and prepare alone, remember that the Holy Spirit is always with us. Worship is what we offer our God in response to his overwhelming love for us. I want our churches and places of ministry to be places of dynamic encounter with Christ. That does not mean our services have to abandon forever much loved forms of service and hymns, for endless innovation and loud faddish music, but it does require preparation and attention to detail and an appropriate sense of authenticity. As Bishop John Grindrod reminded us long ago, “a form of words is only a means to an act of worship.”

Sometimes I am treated like a “worship headmaster” and my approval or disapproval is sought for every variation in worship. My task is to maintain the orthodoxy of faith and the good order and unity of the Church’s witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Please be creative and engaging in preparing and leading worship. I will let you know if I believe something is going astray!

## **Ministry movements**

On September 19, 2009 there was an ordination of Deacons at St Augustine's Church, Port Augusta. At that service I ordained **Steve Clarke** who serves as Diocesan Ministry Development Officer, and **Eric Rieck** who serves in Ordained Local Ministry in the Parish of Port Augusta/Quorn. At that service I collated **The Ven Prue O'Donovan** as Archdeacon of Flinders and **The Ven Brian Jeffries** as Archdeacon of Eyre.

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, again at St Augustine's Church, Port Augusta, there was an ordination of a Priest and a Deacon. **The Rev'd Mary Lewis** was ordained to the priesthood, and the next day inducted as Priest in Charge of the Roxby Downs Community Church.

**Andrea McDougall** was ordained as a deacon and is licensed to serve as Co-ordinator of Anglicare Willochra. The appointment of a new MDO has been a great gift to the Diocese. Steve brings a unique style, and an energetic and challenging intellect to this ministry, and he is gaining the respect and confidences of clergy and laity as he ministers with us and to us. Mary Lewis's appointment to Roxby has been an answer to prayer and I am sure that she will build well on the foundational work done by The Rev'd Bob McKay.

**Mr Peter and Mrs Helen McAlley** have come from Melbourne to positions of non-stipendiary leadership in the parish of Eastern Eyre. They both have extensive experience in pastoral care and counselling and have been warmly welcomed by the churches and wider communities of Cleve, Cowell and Kimba.

**Mr Steve Davis** has accepted an invitation to come to the Parish of Streaky Bay as Deacon in Charge from mid August. Steve and his wife Lyn have both been teachers and principals in rural schools for many years and are returning to the country after some time in Adelaide. Steve will be ordained to the diaconate on 17<sup>th</sup> July, although further details have not yet been settled.

**The Rev'd Gunnar Rippon** has been appointed as Ministry District Priest in the Ministry District of Wakefield and is to be commissioned next Wednesday evening. This leaves vacant the part time position based at Balaklava, but I have had discussions with a priest about this position and hope to make an appointment after further consultation in the District.

**The Rev'd Philippa Wetherell** concluded her remarkable ministry at Wudinna, in the Ministry District of Eyre and in the parish of Eastern Eyre at Christmas time, and she has retired to Melbourne, where she is helping in the local parish, pursuing her love of theatre and opera, and learning to lift weights at a local gym! Visiting clergy and others are supporting the lay leaders in the Ministry District while we seek a new priest for that part of the diocese.

**The Rev'd Simon Waters** decided in February to step aside from full time ministry for the present. He and his family continue to live at Maitland and Simon will continue to serve on the Anglicare Willochra committee.

After nearly ten years in the diocese, five at Port Augusta and four in Wakefield, **The Ven. Mark Thomas** resigned as Ministry District Priest in Wakefield and Archdeacon of Flinders to return to Adelaide

**The Revd Bob McKay** returned to Tasmania at the end of January at the conclusion of his two year Intentional Interim ministry at Roxby Downs. Bob and Jan will be thankfully remembered by many friends at Roxby and further afield.

**The Rev'd Susan Straub** , who has served at Port Lincoln since 2005, will conclude her full time ministry there in early August. Susan will move to her home in Adelaide, but will continue to be available for locum and supply ministry. I thank her for five years of good leadership and ministry in Port Lincoln.

**The Rev'd Trevor Briggs**, Ordained Local Ministry priest at Gladstone, and Diocesan Registrar retires from the end of May. He and Anne will move to their retirement home in Kadina in early June.

In February, **The Rev'd Lettie Allen** formally retired from full time ministry. Lettie has struggled with health issues for the last couple of years, but hopes to keep well enough to offer locum and supply ministry on an occasional basis. She will always be the first woman and the first daughter of the Diocese, ordained as a priest in Willochra.

**Mr Grant Hay** has ministered part time at Point Pearce for nearly eighteen months. Until recently, Grant was employed by the Diocese of Adelaide and we paid for 2 days ministry each week. From early 2010, Grant has been employed by this Diocese. Adelaide buys one day per week of his time from us so that Grant can visit

Aboriginal prisoners in the Remand Centre and the Yatala Gaol. The rest of his time is divided between the Point Pearce Community and the Port Augusta Gaol. A small grant from BCA helps to support this ministry. The scope of this ministry and its potential, is immense. There have been, and continue to be problems associated with too many demands being made of one lay minister, however, I believe this is very important ministry which we must try to maintain. If I can help frame this ministry more realistically, with clearer lines of responsibility and accountability, it may be possible to get more funding from some of our mission agencies.

### **Some Opportunities Ahead**

Last year a few congregations in the Diocese engaged with **Back to Church Sunday**. In the UK this movement has grown remarkably over a few years and many churches look forward to this day when a special effort is made to engage with people who have given up coming to worship. At our recent conference in WA the Australian bishops agreed to sponsor this idea in every diocese. I hope that the proposal which will come before us at this Synod will receive strong support.

The **National Church Life Survey** has become part of the Australian church landscape over the past decade. Some of its findings have challenged our views of ourselves and have been uncomfortable. When correlated with Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, the statistical analysis has helped us to understand our own strengths and weaknesses better. For this reason alone, I think the NCLS is valuable. It does not provide us with solutions, but it does point us to some of our “blind spots”.

Second, the Survey has a wider significance than the local congregation or diocese. The snap shot of church life it offers enables long term trends and changes to be seen by those with a long view across the Australian church and across most denominations.

Last year some of you met **Bishop Stephen Platten** and his wife, Rosslie, from the diocese of Wakefield, when they spent nearly a week in the Diocese in September. At this Synod we have as our guest, Canon Bob Cooper, from the parish of St Giles, Pontefract, who is here for a “sabbatical experience”. Many of you have already met Bob, and there will be an opportunity to hear him preach at the Eucharist tomorrow morning. Links like this are a wonderful opportunity for us to grow in our knowledge and understanding of other parts of our Anglican family. Our Chancellor visited the Wakefield Diocesan Offices when he was last in the UK, and I hope that Archdeacon Jeffries will spend some time in a Wakefield parish next year. This link has come about as a result of the long term prayer link between MU members in this diocese and their counterparts in Wakefield, UK.

**The Ecospirituality Program** led by Terry and Geraldine Kreig from Port Lincoln, and facilitated by the Vicar General is in its 15<sup>th</sup> year of operation. It continues to attract newcomers as well as return participants, and is a wonderful way to experience the geological and environmental beauty of our diocese, and especially the Flinders Ranges with a small group of fellow travellers including someone with gifts in Christian spirituality. As a time of rest and renewal it is hard to beat and I commend the program to members of Synod.

I am delighted by the work of the Vicar General in his role as **Director of Spirituality**. Fr Michael has arranged a great range of opportunities for people of the diocese to deepen their faith and discipleship. Some have been very successful, like the recent Retreat exploring Orthodox spiritual pathways, held at Burra. Others have migrated around the diocese, depending on presenters and participants' needs. The library of spiritual books that Michael carries everywhere is well used and much appreciated. In our current climate, when "spirituality" is a word often claimed by the New Age or other quasi religious movements, it is important that we stake our claim to our heritage of spiritual growth, development and literature. Christians have always taken the spiritual life seriously and this ministry is a wonderful opportunity to open the rich Christian traditions of spirituality to everyday Anglicans.

## **Episcopal ministry beyond the Diocese**

Since the last General Synod in 2007 I have served on the Standing Committee of General Synod and have been involved with a task group looking at strategies for dealing with pastoral breakdown between a diocese and the diocesan bishop. I have also served on a task groups investigating issues for rural dioceses struggling with survival, and another group of bishops from dioceses dependent on the Murray/Darling basin exploring ways in which the church might respond to ongoing water crises.

I continue to be the Chairman of the Australian Council of The Mission to Seafarers. This involves working closely with our National Coordinator of Ministry and the national council and occasional work with the parent body in the UK.

I continue membership of the Board of ABM, and have recently been reappointed to that position.

Although we have not met for the last couple of years, I remain the Anglican co-convenor of the national Anglican/Lutheran Consultation.

After several years as convenor of the annual Bishops' Conference, I am delighted to be handing that responsibility to another bishop after the 2011 Conference.

During the last year Archbishop Jeffrey and I have met on a frequent and regular basis as we have sought ways forward for those involved in the disputes in the Diocese of The Murray.

I believe that it is important that the Synod knows about my national commitments. Every diocesan bishop in

Australia has a similar list of national responsibilities, although many have far weightier responsibilities than mine.

### **Indigenous Australians**

Over the last few years I have worked closely with the staff of ABM as we seek new ways to minister with and amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are two indigenous bishops who serve as assistant bishops in North Queensland and who are notionally available to indigenous communities around the nation. However there are some real problems with this model.

Anglicare SA has engaged in some exploratory work in the APY Lands in the far north of the state, in response to the appointment of its CEO, Lynn Arnold as a Reconciliation ambassador. What emerges from those visits is yet to be seen.

Grant Hay, licensed as a Lay Chaplain at present, offers good preaching, teaching and pastoral ministry in the Point Pearce Community and at the Port Augusta Gaol amongst Aboriginal prisoners. He has had some visiting at the Port Lincoln gaol as well. As far as I can tell, Grant is the only indigenous person working amongst Aboriginal people on behalf of the Anglican Church in South Australia.

In South Australia the churches most involved in ministry with Aboriginal people were and are the Presbyterian/ Methodist/Uniting Church and the Lutheran Church of

Australia. Both of these groups are finding this ministry increasingly difficult

There is a motion on the Notice paper about related matters and I do not wish to pre-empt any debate on that motion, but it seems to me that we are at a difficult moment in the relationship between the First Australians and those of us who have arrived here in the last two hundred years.

For most of us, the multilayered complexities and problems and joys of our indigenous brothers and sisters are simply hard work. We don't know what to do, how best to help to promote harmony and growth in our links with indigenous Australians.

Recently I spent some time with Fred Chaney, former Senator for WA and now a Co- chair of Reconciliation Australia. He spoke to me about the Reconciliation Action Plan process (RAP) which has been developed by Reconciliation Australia to assist business and community groups to raise their understanding of and conscious commitment to reconciliation between all Australians. Organisations as different as RioTinto, the ANZ bank, the Marist Brothers in Australia, and local government authorities, have all engaged at different, appropriate levels with a RAP process and so have begun the hard work of trying to see and understand how we might live together better in this great country. I am excited by the possibility that we might engage in a RAP process of our own, here in Willochra.

I think the best way to explore this will be for the Diocesan Council to decide whether it wants to engage in a RAP exercise, as the Diocesan Council, and then we may have some experience and advice to bring to a

future Synod about wider application of a RAP process in the diocese. There will not be significant financial consequences of this suggestion. A RAP is designed to help participants to identify for themselves ways in which they might listen to, learn from, and engage more effectively with indigenous Australians.

At a national level, in the last few years there has been a great deal of talk about indigenous matters, and some helpful action, as well as the very contentious issues of the Northern Territory intervention and the National Apology. But I believe that in our relationships with indigenous Australians, as with almost every significant relationship, the small, the local and the practical are the places where real change and real growth can begin.

### **The Diocese of The Murray**

Most of you know that there has been a dispute between the Bishop of The Murray, and some clergy and a large group of lay people, which has been going on for some years. I have tried to offer support both to the Bishop and to those clergy and lay folk who have approached me during this time. However, just before Christmas 2009, following many

months of negotiations and unhappiness, the Archbishop of Adelaide and I together laid charges against the Bishop of The Murray in the Special Tribunal of our Church. The Special Tribunal is the panel of a judge, a bishop and a senior priest established under the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia to deal with serious charges made against a diocesan bishop. This was not action that we took lightly – there has only ever been one other case that has proceeded to the Special Tribunal. I believe that every other possible avenue had been tried without any hope of resolution, and that the gravity of the complaints leading to the Charges left me with no real alternative. The matters are currently in process and it would be inappropriate for me to comment further about details.

Several people have asked me why I joined Archbishop Driver in this action when he could have instituted the Tribunal on his own complaint. I would be very unhappy if I believed that a bishop from another diocese was interfering in the affairs of Willochra, and the independence of our dioceses is one of the clearest characteristics of the Anglican Church in Australia. However I also believe that the bishops share a moral collective responsibility for the life and reputation of our Church and especially for the unity of the Church. I believe that to proceed with charges against the Bishop of The Murray in the Special Tribunal was the only way to deal with the substantial impasse that was causing great damage to all those involved and to the wider mission of the Church.

This is a constant matter in my mind and heart and prayers and I invite you to pause with me now and pray for God's reconciling love to be poured out on us all and especially on those involved in this process.

**A proposed Covenant for the Anglican Communion.**

Over the last ten years there have been many papers written, many books published and many conferences attended, which have tried to understand changes in the way Anglicans define themselves, and the nature of the Anglican Communion. The causes for this "identity crisis" are complex and include changes in social structure in Western countries, emerging strength in churches that were once colonial dependents, especially some African Churches, strongly divergent views about the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the growth of militant anti-Christian forces like strident atheism and aggressive forms of other great religious traditions.

The focus point for a great deal of the anxiety resulting from these many influences has been the dispute between the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Churches of the Global South concerning the election of Bishop Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire and subsequent criticism and jurisdictional fights between perceived "liberal" churches and "conservative" churches.

At the Lambeth Conference this division was evident in an alternative gathering of conservative bishops held in the weeks immediately prior to Lambeth and in the Archbishop of Canterbury's decision not to invite Bishop Robinson to attend Lambeth. I want to stress that the issues raised by the election of a gay person as bishop, the sanctioning of same-gender relationships in some US and Canadian dioceses, and the establishment of "rogue" jurisdictions within the Episcopal Church by a few Global South bishops are the presenting issues, the symptoms of deeper sociological, theological and political issues. It is also important to remember that this is not the first time that the Anglican Communion has had to face very significant internal disputes.

The current series of crisis points has led the Archbishop of Canterbury and the other advisory groups of our Churches to work at new ways to define our common identity and yet to acknowledge real and significant differences. All parties to the disputations have Jesus' prayer from John 17 that "we may all be one" ringing in their heads. The various international bodies who give leadership to our Communion have agreed on a proposed Covenant model of mutual accountability and responsibility, and over the next few years each national church will be asked to respond to the proposal. Our General Synod, meeting later this year, is likely to ask each diocesan synod to respond to the proposed Covenant, before the

General Synod deals with it again in 2013. This incredibly convoluted process is a reflection of the dispersed nature of our Anglican way of being Christian and is both a blessing and a curse! I am not yet convinced that the Covenant is the best way for us to proceed and suspect that it may be both an over-reaction to the current climate and also ineffectual in satisfying all parties involved. The strongest argument in favour of the Covenant is that it does outline a process by which Churches in dispute can relate to each other in a godly way. It seems to me that one of the strengths of our Communion is that it is just that – a Communion of national churches who agree to a very simple set of common beliefs and practices, and who acknowledge a great deal of autonomy to national churches and to local dioceses. The so called Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral which first emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century suggested some absolute basics for Anglican identity and was restated in the Windsor Report, published just before Lambeth 2008, in this form:

- a. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God.*
- b. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.*
- c. The two sacraments, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, ministered with the unfailing use of Christ's words of institution and the elements ordained by him.*
- d. The historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs*

*of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.*

This is a remarkably succinct statement. To be in full communion with Anglican churches, local (national) churches are required to show these marks in their life and structures. The Quadrilateral defines the Scriptures and their authority without specifying how they are to be understood or interpreted, except in relation to the Nicene Creed. It is clear about the importance and the basic form of the dominical sacraments, but not theologically or liturgically prescriptive. It ensures an expression of ministry focussed in the historic episcopate, but allows for huge variation in application, depending on local need and understanding. How incredibly open this is! James Jones, the Bishop of Liverpool argues very strongly that in times of dispute we need to make space for truth and grace to come to the surface.

Jesus, he says, *“was neither truthless in his grace, nor graceless in his truth. I fear that in our debates with each other and with the world...we have come over as graceless.”*

Jones' observations should give us pause in the quick way we move to support our own positions without serious and sacrificial engagement with those with whom we disagree profoundly. I suspect that the open space of the minimalist position of the Lambeth Quadrilateral might offer more opportunity for grace and truth to emerge in our Communion than a covenant relationship. My other problem with the covenant proposal is

that it might institutionalise our disagreements and so make it difficult for us to move forward together in those important tasks we share and about which we agree. Again, James Jones has a helpful observation.

*“Energy is sapped by internal definitions, rather than released into engaging with the world so loved of God.”*

( both quotations are from an article Making Space for Truth and Grace in [A Fallible Church](#). DLT London 2008)

For ordinary Anglicans in Willochra, these matters may seem far away, and not particularly interesting, but we will be required to engage with them in the years ahead as we seek to be faithful to the Lord of the Church and as we try to strengthen and grow our local church and participate fully in fellowship within our global Communion.

### **Conclusion and Thanks**

The business paper is short, and since there is no legislation to deal with, the Synod is unlikely to get bogged down in procedure. However there are some very important matters before us that may engender some strong feeling and debate. Please remember that we are here to discern the will of God for us, not to win our argument.

Let me offer some words of thanks.

On behalf of the Synod I thank The Rev'd Dr Cath Holt and those who have worked to prepare for our meeting here in Whyalla.

As always the Staff at Church Office has worked hard to ensure the preparations for Synod. I am especially grateful for the good humour and commitment of my Personal Assistant, Kaye Nicolson.

The Vicar General is a constant source of strength, encouragement and fair criticism.

The MDO challenges my comfort zone most days and I am grateful for his passion for the Gospel and for God's people.

The Archdeacons, Prue and Brian have slipped into their new roles with energy and commitment and I am grateful for their "care for all the churches."

Our Chancellor is a great source of wisdom and advice for tricky moments and also exercises a hidden ministry of care for me.

I want to mention Bob Smith, from Gladstone, who has cared for the garden at Bishop's House for the last 9 years. Ill health means he is unable to continue that work. I am grateful for all he has done.

Finally I want to record the gratitude of the whole Diocese and my personal thanks to The Rev'd Trevor Briggs, who has served as our Registrar for nearly 19 years. There will be opportunities this evening to honour Trevor and Anne (and to roast him), but I know that you all share my gratitude to God for his faithfulness, commitment and service. Thank you Trevor!

Father, we see in Jesus Christ your love and compassion for the whole world.  
By your Holy Spirit renew and empower us to witness to the world, that all may know your life and love. Amen

**The Right Reverend Garry Weatherill**  
**1st May 2010**