

Address
by
The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall
Archbishop of Brisbane
to the
Third Session
of the
75th Synod of the Diocese of Brisbane
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Introduction

In the name of God I welcome you to this third session of the seventy-fifty Synod of the Diocese of Brisbane. These few days will be hard work, requiring concentration and application but from the outset let us remind ourselves that we are not in this alone, that the Holy Spirit is the One who calls us together and who is present and active within and among us. In the course of this Synod you will see and experience plenty of evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, i.e. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians5:22).

So in the midst of the hard work, the debate and the difficult decisions, let us not lose sight of the presence of God's Spirit among us and let us rejoice in the signs of life and hope and holiness we see in each other.

The challenge of 2006

Synod last year faced a major financial challenge. You will recall that Synod did not approve the draft budget because of a significant projected reduction in income. Synod asked the Diocesan Council to recast the draft budget to ensure a balanced budget for 2007. The Diocesan Council did the work as requested and before the end of September 2006 circulated a revised, balanced budget to members of Synod.

That's a very shorthand description of an enormous amount of work and difficult decisions. Making the adjustments necessary was not just playing with figures on a page. Inevitably it involved people, their lives and ministries. There was considerable pain and sacrifice.

Staff of the Ministry Education Commission were deeply affected. Staff numbers were reduced, teams were reorganised and some ministries, which had been extremely valuable in the life of the diocese, were curtailed. Children's ministry, youth ministry, theological education and ministry formation were all affected in substantial ways.

The Parishes and Other Mission Agencies Commission was also affected significantly especially in the area of chaplaincy. A number of chaplaincy positions were reduced from full time to part time and we searched out other ways to keep people on full stipends wherever possible.

Staffing in the Diocesan Services Commission was also reduced when the decision was taken not to replace the Diocesan Accountant on his retirement. This increased the already considerable burden on a minimal staff team.

Changes of the magnitude we dealt with are difficult at any time. When they come unexpectedly as they did last year there is added anxiety and disruption. I pay tribute to the Directors of the Commissions and the then Co-ordinator of Hospital Chaplaincy for the creative and pastoral way in which they went about implementing necessary changes. I also pay tribute to all those who have been affected personally. I thank them for the good grace, faithfulness and heart-felt commitment to the overall mission of the diocese which was so evident in the way they conducted themselves. Let me dispel immediately any perception there might be that the ministry of particular individuals was not valued or significant in the life of the diocese. That is far from the truth. Their faith and service has been and is greatly appreciated and while we will not go back to the precise way things were, as a diocese we now need to move forward and rebuild and rejuvenate those ministries. And I'm glad to say that is already happening.

The episcopal team also faced significant changes as a result of the budget situation. I was convinced that the diocese needed three regional bishops to minister effectively throughout the three regions of the diocese. But, given the budget situation, I proposed to the Diocesan Council that, for some time, we should operate with only two regional bishops. The Diocesan Council recognised how inadequate that arrangement would be and expressed the firm conviction that the diocese needed three regional bishops. As I say, I agreed in principle with that conviction but advised the Council that I did not believe I would be acting responsibly to proceed immediately to appoint a third regional bishop following Bishop Ron Williams's retirement. Rather, I believed it proper to wait until the sale of the property at Eldernell Terrace had been completed and the proceeds were generating income sufficient to cover the cost of a third regional bishop. That is all now in place and, as you are aware, I have announced the appointment of Archdeacon Geoff Smith to be bishop of the southern region, effective from 25 July this year.

It's appropriate for me at this point to place on record my deep appreciation for the ministry of Bishop Ron and Katie Williams in the diocese. They have given unstintingly of themselves. Since they came to us from Adelaide in 1993, they have contributed enormously to many initiatives throughout the diocese and beyond but particularly in the southern region and in the cathedral. We are enormously grateful

for all we have received and as they have retired in Brisbane we look forward to their continuing ministries among us.

At the same time I rejoice that Archdeacon Geoff Smith will become the Bishop of the Southern Region from next month. Geoff is a son of the diocese and his ministry is widely respected. He will bring strategic skills, a depth of experience in mission and a passion to see the church and its ministries grow in the southern region. I am sure he will be an able and enterprising member of the episcopal team.

You will also be aware that I have appointed the Very Reverend John Parkes to be an Assistant Bishop in the diocese without responsibility for a region. John's role will be to assist with the Archbishop's workload in order to free me to be out and about the diocese more than has been possible up to now, especially given my responsibilities as Primate. John will also maintain a much reduced role as Dean of the Cathedral so that we do not lose the momentum that has been built up in recent years with the completion project. All being well, we hope to see the cathedral completed in time for the celebration of the sesquicentenary of the diocese in 2009. I also point out, in the context of the diocesan budget, that this position does not represent an additional impost. It is funded from the existing allocation for the Archbishop's Chaplain, together with the support that comes to the diocese of Brisbane while I am Primate. John's theological acumen, teaching, ministry and communication skills are well known and I believe he will make a notable contribution to the episcopal team in the diocese.

The role and structure of Diocesan Council

For some years now we have been working steadily at updating the governance and management structure of the diocese. The introduction of the Governance Canon in 2004 saw the five commissions established. In the few years since, the Canon has been refined, the commissions have been bedded down and resourcing for them has been evolving. At the time of the establishment of the five commissions we also recognized that the role and structure of the Diocesan Council also needed thought. That work has now been done and a substantial report is before this Synod.

I suspect that most of us would prefer to invest our time and energy more directly in the mission of the church. Nevertheless these matters of governance and structure are necessary and important. I believe we're on the right track and slowly but surely we are attending to a whole raft of issues which will equip us to get on with our part in God's mission. I commend the report to you. I look forward to the debate on it and I thank Mark Vincent and Gary Harch and the other members of the team for the significant amount of work and widespread consultation that has brought us to this point.

Ordination of Women and pastoral provisions

Late in 2005 I met with some members of the church who continue to feel disaffected as a result of the ordination of women. From the outset let me say that I remain convinced that the ordination of women to all three Orders in the church is right and I intend to continue to support that view. However, I also accept my responsibility to

care for those who are deeply convinced that the ordination of women is wrong. Following the meeting, in which I listened to the concerns of a representative group, I appointed a committee under the chairmanship of The Dean, and including people representing the whole spectrum of views about the ordination of women, to see if it were possible to develop some pastoral guidelines for use in the diocese that would ensure the best possible care for all people. We have now before us the report of that committee with some quite specific proposals for pastoral provision. I expect that there will be considerable debate about at least some of those provisions and the Synod may wish to amend some of the detail before recommending the provisions to me for my consideration. I look forward to that discussion and trust that it will be conducted, as are all debates in this place, with a spirit of respect and concern for one another. I thank The Dean and the members of that group for the careful work that has been done and for the substantial report they have provided to resource our discussion.

The Anglican Communion and an Anglican Covenant

Members of Synod will be aware that tensions continue within the worldwide Anglican Communion. At the first Primates' meeting I attended in Tanzania earlier this year, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Covenant Design Group released a draft covenant for the Anglican Communion. It is hoped that such a covenant might provide a framework for dealing with significant disagreements throughout the Communion. The idea is that each member church of the Communion would voluntarily enter into a covenant through the action of its national or General Synod. A covenant would spell out the character of relationships between the member churches of the Communion and, in particular, how we deal with conflict.

A number of different types of covenant have been floated. There's a juridical approach which would attempt to introduce a kind of international code of canon law. My own perception is that there's not widespread support for such a model. A second approach is one which would focus on the mission of the church and be more an aspirational kind of document. My feeling is that most people want to see elements of that type of approach in a covenant but also wish to see quite practical and concrete processes for outlining the way disagreements will be dealt with. A third type of covenant would be confessional in nature, setting out the constitutive beliefs of Anglicanism and providing ways to deal with transgressing churches. Again I see no great support for this way forward, representing as it does a significant departure from our Anglican heritage.

The draft covenant which has been released for discussion around the Communion is of a fourth sort which incorporates some of the elements I've already mentioned, to varying degrees. It is based on foundations which are long-standing and widely accepted within Anglicanism. Such foundations include the autonomy of each Province, the Lambeth Quadrilateral and the historical place of the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion in our Anglican history, without making them constitutive of Anglicanism. It includes aspirational elements such as collaboration in global mission. But it also faces the reality of conflict and the need for mechanisms to deal with it. And so the draft envisages a clearer and somewhat 'beefed-up' roles for the instruments of communion that have been evolving. It doesn't go so far, however, as to turn the instruments into centralised power structures

or to attempt to introduce coercive international canon law, either of which would change the character of the Communion immeasurably.

Archbishop Drexel Gomez, the Primate of the West Indies and Chairman of the Covenant Design Group, has made specific mention of the input received from Australia and its value in shaping the draft Covenant. I commend that material to you and attach the draft Covenant to this address for your prayerful consideration. The Australian working group has done further work on the draft and, at the request of the General Synod Standing Committee, has provided an initial response to the Covenant Design Group. The next step is for a revised draft to go to the Lambeth Conference in 2008. Following that it will be considered by the Anglican Consultative Council and eventually do the rounds of the Provinces again for formal consideration by General Synods throughout the Communion. It will be a lengthy process but one which I believe is worth an investment of time and energy. The Anglican Communion has value. It has a unique contribution to make to the world wide Christian church and its effectiveness depends to a very large extent on maintaining its unity in diversity. We would all be much poorer were the Communion to fragment.

Going for Growth

Let me now turn to what I intend to be the major theme for this address and one which I hope we will carry forward with us into the debates and discussions of the next few days.

Last year I focused on *Going for Growth*. That theme and the ideas canvassed in the address seemed to resonate with people throughout the diocese. They stimulated a lot of discussion and seemed to release some energy and some hope. So I want to invite you to join with me in building on that base.

Let me remind you that the foundation of *Going for Growth* is a theology of mission which sees God at work in the world, healing, reconciling and renewing. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God launched a new creation and through the Spirit God is now and will be at work in the world spreading the ramifications of resurrection until the new creation is fulfilled. We are caught up in that work of the Holy Spirit. The church is the community of the Spirit, sent by Jesus as he was sent by the Father, to carry through the work of new creation.

Over the last twelve months our imaginations, individually and collectively, have been fired a bit as we've intentionally opened our hearts and minds to embrace growth. We understand growth to mean growing the church's impact for God's mission. Growth therefore involves growth in faith, growth in congregations, growth in generosity and giving and growth in service.

Now I don't think we often recognise the extent to which God is actually doing this in our midst already. This is not simply wishful thinking on our part or day-dreaming that denies reality. We can actually point to significant signs of growth that God has brought about among us recently. They are indicators, I believe, of what God's future holds.

Ordination candidates

One indicator of growth is the number of candidates for ordination.

Last year, 24 people participated in vocational discernment conferences. Of those 24, 21 people were invited to enter formation for ordination. The average age of those invited into formation was 39 and the average age of those offering for stipendiary ministry was 37.

This year, 22 people will participate in vocational discernment conferences. The average age is 41. The average of those enquiring about stipendiary ministry is 35.

The number of people offering for stipendiary priesthood has risen from one or two per year a few years ago to somewhere around 8 per year now. The average of clergy in the diocese is now falling. It's early days yet, but these are significant developments which augur well for leadership in the future.

I pay tribute to the work of the Reverend Rod MacDonald over the last few years. His meticulous following up of people, his encouragement of enquirers, his pastoral care for them and their families has been outstanding and is an excellent investment in the future of the diocese.

May I also pay tribute to you, to clergy and lay leaders. This increase in the number of people enquiring about ordination and entering formation for ordination is very heartening. It is a reflection of the effort we have all put in over the last few years. And I should warn you that shortly after Synod I will be asking clergy and lay leaders once again to identify young people who should be encouraged to think about their vocation in life. I'll be asking you to identify young people over 16 years of age whom I can then invite to a seekers day in August to explore their vocation.

One of the challenges that will flow from this, a happy challenge, is that in 2010 and 2011, we will be stretched as a Diocese to find sufficient parish placements for assistant curates. So I plan to begin identifying potential parishes and writing to the Rectors and Parish Councils to ask if they might set a goal for three or four years' time to take on an assistant curate for a couple of years. I hope the parishes will respond to that challenge and see part of their ministry as providing training grounds for newly ordained clergy and in that way investing in future leadership in the diocese.

Preliminary results from National Church Life Survey

A second indicator from which we can take some heart, I think, is the early results of the most recent National Church Life Survey. Attendance numbers have not yet been released and aren't expected to be available until early next year. But my sense is that the decline we've been told about for decades is being arrested and there are signs of a turning around. What has been released so far tells us that of the nine main core quality scores for churches examined in the survey the Diocese of Brisbane has shown a marginal falling back in two of the nine areas but marginal growth in seven of those nine areas. Between 2001 and 2006 we've fallen back slightly in the scores for leadership and faith-sharing in local congregations. But in the same period we've

grown in terms of growth in faith, vital worship, sense of belonging, vision, innovation, service and inclusion. These early results are certainly not grounds for complacency but should motivate us to move on in the direction we're headed.

Let me turn then to our theme *Going for Growth* and touch briefly on each of the dimensions pointing to some hopeful signs of what God is bringing about among us.

Growth in faith

The first dimension is growth in faith. The last twelve months has seen runs on the board in this area. Let me give you just a couple of examples.

The Schools Commission and the Ministry Education Commission have worked together to produce an induction program for new staff coming to work in Anglican schools. The aim of the program is to help new staff gain a better understanding of Anglicanism, to explore why the church is involved in education through schools and to consider ways in which the Anglican ethos and the Anglican character are expressed in the life of the schools – what makes Anglican schools distinctive on the ground.

This short course is meant to be friendly and non-threatening. New school staff move through a number of different learning activities. They explore the content of the Anglican faith, the marks of mission of the world-wide Anglican Communion, the diversity that is found within the Anglican church, the way in which the Anglican church is organized and some of the history of Anglicanism. In the course of the program the staff participate in what's been called a 'teaching Eucharist' conducted by a school chaplain. They also join in a tour of the school which identifies the ways in which Anglicanism is expressed on that school site. For example, they look at the stained glass windows, the memorials, the architecture and meaning of the chapel, look at art work and so on and discuss how the setting reflects mission in an Anglican context. The program also involves new staff hearing from their workmates who have come to value the Anglican ethos within the school.

The hope is that staff in all Anglican schools will complete the program over the next two years. So far it has been conducted at Coomera Anglican College and it will take place at St Luke's, Bundaberg in July.

Comments from participants have been very encouraging. The new staff have said things like "I learnt many new things about the Eucharist today", "I loved the hands-on constructive activities", "A great deal of effort has been put into preparing this program and it shows", "The sessions have been informative and educative", "The local content shows how Anglicanism matters right here in our school – its great".

I think you can see here clear evidence of the way in which the Schools Commission and the Ministry Education Commission have collaborated and risen to the challenge put to them by the Synod over the last few years to become more intentional about the Anglican identity of our schools and in carrying out the Church's mission through the schools. All those involved are to be congratulated.

A second course focusing on our community services is already being developed. The aim is to involve the senior managers of Spiritus to help them gain a better understanding of Anglicanism, to explore what it is that motivates the church to be involved in community service, to look at ways in which the Anglican character is already expressed in their workplaces and also to explore ways in which it might be more fully expressed in what they do. Part of this program will also involve exploring a theological rationale for community services in order to set all the work we do in that context of mission.

Again, this is a collaborative enterprise between the Ministry Education Commission and the Community Services Commission and I hope the staff of the Commission find it stimulating and worthwhile and gain a new sense of purpose and identity in their work as a result. The program will take place in the second half of this year with 70 senior managers of Spiritus and I hope that the impact will then flow on to involve other members of the Spiritus staff in an induction program in the same way as we have with schools.

Growth in faith is alive and well. Another example is an initiative for lay leaders in the western region of the diocese. In some parts of the western region, we struggle to maintain stipendiary ordained ministry. But even in places where there is stipendiary ministry, the ministry of lay people is greatly valued and central in the life of the church. In order to build the valuable ministry of lay people and to strengthen it, western region parishes were invited to send 2 or 3 people to a live-in weekend conference in early 2006. The aim of the weekend was to bring together lay people from faith communities around the region, acknowledge and affirm the importance of lay leadership and to develop their ministry skills.

Again, the Ministry Education Commission was involved and Don Saines was the key leader at the weekend. I managed to get there myself for the concluding Eucharist and offer my encouragement to these key lay leaders. By all accounts the weekend succeeded in enlivening and enthusing them in mission. An ongoing structure was developed: parishes were grouped geographically and since early 2006 lay leaders in those groups have been meeting every quarter for study, to celebrate the Eucharist, to share a meal and to share and learn from their experiences of ministry, particularly in Christian education and pastoral care. The meetings are open to anyone who is interested in joining and the feedback from them has been very positive. There's now an emerging desire among those lay leaders to get together across the whole region every three years or so. This has been another great initiative to assist people in isolated and rural communities to grow in faith and to empower lay leaders in mission.

While there are hopeful signs of growth in faith around the diocese, we shouldn't lose sight of the NCLS result that tells us we need to work harder on effective faith-sharing. Faith-sharing courses such as the catechumenate, Emmaus, Credo, Alpha and a host of other possibilities should be a regular part of life in all of our ministry units. Bob Jackson's research shows, though, that they only lead to real growth in congregations when they're part of a larger approach that includes making contact with new people and when they lead on to next steps at the end of the course.

Growth in congregations

Let me turn then to the second dimension of *Going for Growth* which is about growing congregations in numbers. One way this happens is through planting entirely new congregations. It's great that new congregations are being planted in this diocese. It's happening in Burpengary, in Northlakes and in Moore Park at Bundaberg and there are other new congregations being established within existing parish communities.

Let me tell you about one as an example. Sunday Sunset is a new congregation being planted in the Parish of Gold Coast North. It meets in Coomera Anglican College and is growing by tapping into the network that has grown up around the school. It takes a quite relaxed and informal approach to worship, in comparison with the style of worship that takes place in the parish church. It is intentionally very welcoming of newcomers and tries hard to cater for and include children and young families in worship. Responses have been very positive. Have a look at this little snippet of what Sunday Sunset is all about.

A second example is from the Parish of Grovely in the northern region. Following last year's Synod the Parish Council decided to go for growth. It reorganized itself and decided to meet less often so that people could invest more time and energy in mission. They've devised *Come to the Waters* to grow the congregation and help people grow in faith based on the sacrament of baptism. Coupled with that there's a new congregation developing around what's called a pram service for young mothers with babies. Again, we can see the beginnings of new congregational life emerging around a focus discerned by that community. Here's a snippet of *Come to the Waters*.

Growth in generosity and giving

The third dimension of *Going for Growth* is about growth in generosity and giving. At a recent meeting of the Provincial bishops, Bishop Godfrey Fryar, Bishop of Rockhampton, told us about what he called an "outbreak of grace" in the Diocese of Rockhampton. One parish generously agreed to pay \$30,000 of an outstanding diocesan contribution owed by another parish. That act of generosity inspired the indebted parish to pay the remaining \$19,000 itself and then it got stuck into paying off a loan to reburish the rectory kitchen that had been weighing the parish down for years. The generosity of the first parish had the wonderful effect of raising the sights of the second and getting it moving. It also evoked a very strong relationship between the two parishes and an enormous sense of gratitude and being valued. And it sparked around the whole diocese what Bishop Godfrey calls an outbreak of grace.

The Diocesan Council got in on the act itself. When it received the \$19,000 from the second parish it forgave the rest of the loan, leaving the parish debt free and well and truly focused on mission.

A third parish then caught the disease and paid off the outstanding diocesan contribution owed by a fourth parish. The Diocesan Council got in on the act again, wiping \$1.50 off the debt for every dollar paid and so the debt of that fourth parish was wiped out.

The Diocesan Synod itself then caught this same spirit of generosity, committing itself to giving 0.7% of diocesan income to the Millennium Development Goals to make poverty history.

This spirit of generosity is not unique to the Diocese of Rockhampton. It's alive and well in the Diocese of Brisbane too. From time to time the Diocesan Council here, too, forgives debts to enable various ministry units to get out from under that burden and move on in mission. The Parish of Robina for some years has been contributing \$6000 per year to the Parish of Jimboomba to enable a full time stipendiary priest to work in that fast-growing area. I know of at least two parishes where generous individuals are contributing very significant gifts to enable full-time stipendiary ministry to support the parish's growth strategy. A number of parishes support the west in various ways through twinning, through generous support of the Bush Ministry Fund and they also lend their priests to Tara for four or five days at a time to enable sacramental ministry to continue in that isolated area.

I am sure there are many, many other stories of generosity which could be rehearsed. We need to own them, celebrate them, tell them so that the contagion of generosity can be stimulated around the diocese, because there is more growth to happen.

I am pleased to see a Motion on our papers this year seeking to commit us to the Millennium Development Goals in the way recommended by Lambeth 1998 by giving 0.7% of diocesan income to international development. I look forward to consideration of that matter and hope we will be generous as a Synod.

In some other Christian Churches, and indeed in some other dioceses of the Anglican Church of Australia, schools commit a small percentage of their annual income to a fund which then supports the establishment of new schools. That's an idea that has worked elsewhere and can work for us too. I think we should look at it seriously .

A project is about to commence in the Brisbane West deanery to see if we can take a wider view of how parish property assets are used to serve God's total mission more effectively. I hope that project will help to cultivate a pervasive spirit of generosity focused on growing our impact for God's mission through better use of property resources.

Individuals, parishes and organisations responded generously to the deficit last year and contributed \$65,000 which has been used to kick off the Ministry Growth Fund for the Diocese. Proceeds from the resumption of some land at Coomera plus some other reserves which have been identified have also been added to the Growth Fund giving us a beginning of around \$1 million. Parish contributions promised for 2007 show a small increase.

Let's recognise and celebrate that generosity in giving is part of who we are and keep on growing in generosity.

Growth in service

The fourth dimension of *Going for Growth* is growth in service. The church does not exist for itself. We exist to co-operate with God in doing the work of new creation.

We are turned outward towards the communities and people among whom God is doing this work of recreation – creating a new heaven and a new earth.

Spiritus and the Community Services Commission spearhead major avenues of service. I thank all the staff and volunteers for the enormous amount of sacrificial service they undertake in the name of Christ and his Church. I welcome Mr Don Luke the new Executive Director and Mr Rob Law the new chair of the commission to their roles as I acknowledge with great thanks the service given by Mrs Cheryl Herbert and Mr Frank Martin respectively.

Let's not make the mistake of thinking that Spiritus and the Commission do this service on behalf of the rest of us in the sense that schools and faith communities are off the hook. We're all involved in serving others in Christ's name and I'm glad about the developing spirit of partnership and collaboration that's taking shape.

I'm also delighted that a strong and vibrant environment group has emerged in the diocese over the last twelve months. You will notice the presence of Angligrreen during this Synod. They will be nudging our consciences in practical ways but also raising deep and far-reaching moral and theological questions through a significant motion on the business paper. I look forward to it being carefully considered.

Environmental concerns are very much in the mind of our community at present. The impact of the drought has meant water conservation is at the forefront of our minds. The impact of climate change and global warming on the environment is the subject of serious and sustained political debate around the world. Issues about power sources, questions of nuclear energy and carbon trading schemes are very much in focus in the mass media.

It would be wonderful if our churches, parishes, schools and all our organizations could be seen to be giving a lead in this area. And in some ways we are. I can point, for example, to the huge water tank that the parish of Hamilton has installed in its parish grounds. I'm aware of other parishes too taking similar initiatives. St James's, Toowoomba, has been working on water conservation but is also investigating the possibilities of solar power generation and returning power to the electricity grid. I know a number of parishes have tapped into government grants in relation to water projects and so on. All of this is very important and greatly encouraging. It would be great to think that each of our sites, whether it be parish, school or community service, could be seen as an environmentally as well as a spiritually creative oasis in the community – a place of beauty which invites people to rest in God and enjoy the beauty of creation but which is also at the forefront of environmentally friendly approaches.

Going for growth as a diocese

There is one other aspect to *Going for Growth* that is important for us to have before us as the Synod of the Diocese. The bishops and the executive directors of the commissions have been working for some time now to identify specific areas in the diocese where new mission initiatives need to be taken. Where should we be looking to establish new parish-type faith communities or new schools or new community services?

We have done the demographic work in some detail and we have identified places in each of the three regions where those kinds of initiatives are viable and desperately needed. As our 150th anniversary as a diocese approaches in 2009, I hope we can firm up at least one priority project in each region of the diocese and, as a whole diocese together, commit ourselves to making those projects happen as a way of moving forward in mission to mark the 150th anniversary. Certainly we will be looking back and giving thanks for all that has been achieved in the diocese of Brisbane over 150 years and there will be enormous gratitude for that. But we need to set our sights towards the future, too, and ask “How are we now going to give ourselves in mission for future generations as our forebears did for us?” I look forward to those projects taking shape and to us getting behind them as a diocese.

Conclusion

There are clear indicators that God is creating growth among us. Let us be thankful and celebrate that growth in all its dimensions. And the brief glimpses I’ve been able to give here are by no means the whole story. Time doesn’t allow me to tell you about the small country town that couldn’t cope with the 80 young people who were turning up for the youth group. Or of the urban parish that is deliberately growing younger and now has 90% of its congregation under 65. I’m very aware that in virtually every parish and in every school creative work is being done as we go for growth in these four different dimensions. The few examples I’ve highlighted are just the tip of the iceberg and I point to them not to embarrass those concerned, still less to imply that growth isn’t happening elsewhere, but simply to make *Going for Growth* concrete and real and to encourage us all to realise that growth is not only possible, it’s already happening.

I ask that every ministry unit, whether that be parish, school or community service, keep clearly in focus these questions: what will we do this year to grow in faith, to grow in numbers, to grow in service and to grow in generosity? How can we support the whole Church in this diocese to grow in its impact for God’s mission? They are questions for every parish to answer, for every congregation, for every school and community service to answer and, of course, for every individual to answer. We will really start to move when every Anglican asks himself or herself what am I going to do this year in this place where I am to grow in faith myself? What am I going to do myself to assist this ministry setting to grow in numbers? What am I going to do myself to grow in generosity and giving? What am I going to do myself this year to assist this ministry setting to grow in service to the community?

If we keep these questions constantly before us, then we are likely to notice when the Spirit moves and be in a position to align ourselves with what God is doing. And is that not a way of speaking about prayer?

Almighty and everliving God,
you have given your servants
new birth by water and the Spirit,
and have forgiven their sins.
Strengthen them, we pray, with the Holy Spirit
that they may grow in grace.
Increase in them the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of discernment and inner strength,
the spirit of knowledge and true godliness,
and fill them with wonder and awe at your presence,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us, then, enter into the work of this Synod prayerfully, confident that God is at work among us, around us and through us, bringing into being the new creation.

Appendix 1
Report and Draft Covenant for the Anglican Communion
Released by the Archbishop of Canterbury's Covenant Design Group, February 2007

The Covenant Design Group, appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury on behalf of the Primates of the Anglican Communion, held its first meeting in Nassau, the Bahamas, between Monday, 15th and Thursday, 18th January, 2007. The Archbishop of the West Indies, the Most Revd Drexel Gomez, chaired the group.

The meeting discussed four major areas of work related to the development of an Anglican Covenant: its content, the process by which it would be received into the life of the Communion, the foundations on which a covenant might be built, and its own methods of working.

The JSC paper, [*Towards an Anglican Covenant*](#), was one of the initial papers tabled at the meeting, together with a wide range of responses to it from both individuals and from churches and other alliances within the Communion. In addition, a number of correspondents had been invited to submit reflections to the group. The group noted that there was a wide range of support for the concept of covenant in the life of the Communion, and although in the papers submitted there was a great deal of concern about the nature of any covenant that might be put forward for adoption, very few of the respondents objected to the concept of covenant *per se*, but rather saw the covenant as a moment of opportunity within the life of the Communion.

In their discussion, all the members of the group spoke of the value and importance of the continued life of the Anglican Communion as an instrument through which the Gospel could be proclaimed and God's mission carried forward. There was a real desire to see the interdependent life of the Communion strengthened by a covenant which would articulate our common foundations, and set out principles by which our life of Communion in Christ could be strengthened and nurtured.

It was also recognised, however, that the proposal for a covenant was born out of a specific context in which the Communion's life was under severe strain. While the group felt that it was important that the strength of a covenant would be greater if it addressed broad principles, and did not focus on particular issues, the need for its introduction into the life of the Communion in order to restore trust was urgent.

There were therefore two particular factors which would need to be borne in mind:

1. Content

The text of the Covenant would need to hold together and strengthen the life of the Communion. To do so, it need not introduce some new development into the life of the Communion but rather be the clarification of a process of discernment which was embodied in the Windsor Report and in the recent reality of the life of the Instruments of Communion, and which was founded in and built upon the elements traditionally articulated in association with Anglicanism and the life of the Anglican Churches.

2. Urgency

While a definitive text which held all such elements in balance might take time to develop in the life of the Communion, there was also an urgent need to re-establish trust between the churches of the Communion. The faithfulness of patterns of obedience to Christ were no longer recognised across the Communion, despite Paul's call to another way of life (Romans 14.15), and its life would suffer irreparably if some measure of mutual and common commitment to the Gospel was not reasserted in a short time frame. We were mindful also of the words of the Primates at Oporto, "We are conscious that we all stand together at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ, so we know that to turn away from each other would be to turn away from the Cross".

Bearing this in mind, the CDG recommends a dual track approach. The definitive text of any proposed Covenant which could command the long term confidence of the Communion would need extensive consultation and refining. Although several possible texts have already been developed, a text for adoption would need to be debated and accepted in the Provinces through their own appropriate processes before formal synodical processes of adoption, if the Covenant was to be received and have any strength or reality.

At the same time, there needed to be a commitment now to the fundamental shape of the covenant in order to address the concerns of those who feared that the very credibility of the commitment of the Anglican Churches to one another and to the Gospel itself was in doubt.

The CDG therefore proposes that the Primates give consideration to a preliminary draft text for a covenant which has been developed from existing models, that they commend this text to the Provinces for study and response, and that they express an appropriate measure of consent to this text and express the intention to pursue its fine-tuning and adoption through the consultative and constitutional processes of the Provinces.

The Primates are not being asked to commit their churches at this stage, since they are all bound by their own Provincial constitutions to observe due process. What they are being asked to do is to recognise in the general substance of the preliminary draft set forth by the CDG a concise expression of what may be considered as authentic Anglicanism. Primates are also asked to request a response from their Provinces on the draft text to the Covenant Design Group in time for there to be the preparation of a revised draft which could receive initial consideration at the Lambeth Conference.

The text offered is meant to be robust enough to express clear commitment in those areas of Anglican faith about which there has been the most underlying concern in recent events, while at the same time being faithful and consistent with the declarations, formularies and commitments of Anglicanism as they have been received by our Churches. In this way, nothing which is commended in the draft text of the Covenant can be said to be "new"; it is rather an assertion of that understanding of true Christian faith as it has been received in the Anglican Churches.

What is to be offered in the Covenant is not the invention of a new way of being Anglican, but a fresh restatement and assertion of the faith which we as Anglicans

have received, and a commitment to inter-dependent life such as always in theory at least been given recognition.

An Introduction to a Draft Text for an Anglican Covenant

God has called us into communion in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Jn. 1:3). This call is established in God's purposes for creation (Eph. 1:10; 3:9ff.), which have been furthered in God's covenants with Israel and its representatives such as Abraham and most fully in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus. We humbly recognize that this calling and gift of communion grants us responsibilities for our common life before God.

Through God's grace we have been given the Communion of Anglican churches through which to respond to God's larger calling in Christ (Acts 2:42). This Communion provides us with a special charism and identity among the many followers and servants of Jesus. Recognizing the wonder, beauty and challenge of maintaining communion in this family of churches, and the need for mutual commitment and discipline as a witness to God's promise in a world and time of instability, conflict, and fragmentation, we covenant together as churches of this Anglican Communion to be faithful to God's promises through the historic faith we confess, the way we live together and the focus of our mission.

Our faith embodies a coherent testimony to what we have received from God's Word and the Church's long-standing witness; our life together reflects the blessings of God in growing our Communion into a truly global body; and the mission we pursue aims at serving the great promises of God in Christ that embrace the world and its peoples, carried out in shared responsibility and stewardship of resources, and in interdependence among ourselves and with the wider Church.

Our prayer is that God will redeem our struggles and weakness, and renew and enrich our common life so that the Anglican Communion may be used to witness effectively in all the world to the new life and hope found in Christ.

An Anglican Covenant Draft prepared by the Covenant Design Group, January 2007

1 Preamble

(Psalm 127.1-2, Ezekiel 37.1-14, Mark 1.1, John 10.10; Romans 5.1-5, Ephesians 4:1-16, Revelation 2-3)

We, the Churches of the Anglican Communion, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, solemnly covenant together in these articles, in order to proclaim more effectively in our different contexts the Grace of God revealed in the Gospel, to offer God's love in responding to the needs of the world, to maintain the unity in the Spirit in the bond of peace, and to grow up together as a worldwide Communion to the full stature of Christ.

2 The Life We Share: Common Catholicity, Apostolicity and Confession of Faith

(Deuteronomy 6.4-7, Leviticus 19.9-10, Amos 5.14-15, 24; Matthew 25, 28.16-20, 1 Corinthians 15.3-11, Philippians 2.1-11, 1 Timothy 3:15-16, Hebrews 13.1-17)

Each member Church, and the Communion as a whole, affirms:

1. that it is part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
2. that it professes the faith which is uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures as containing all things necessary for salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith, and which is set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation;
3. that it holds and duly administers the two sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with the unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him;
4. that it participates in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God;
5. that, led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons [\[1\]](#);
6. our loyalty to this inheritance of faith as our inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making Him known to our societies and nations.

3 Our Commitment to Confession of the Faith

(Deuteronomy 30.11-14, Psalm 126, Mark 10.26-27, Luke 1.37, 46-55, John 8: 32, 14:15-17, 1 Corinthians 11.23-26, 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5;)

In seeking to be faithful to God in their various contexts, each Church commits itself to:

1. uphold and act in continuity and consistency with the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition, biblically derived moral values and the vision of humanity received by and developed in the communion of member Churches;
2. seek in all things to uphold the solemn obligation to sustain Eucharistic communion, welcoming members of all other member churches to join in its own celebration, and encouraging its members to participate in the Eucharist in a member church in accordance with the canonical discipline of that host church;
3. ensure that biblical texts are handled faithfully, respectfully, comprehensively and coherently, primarily through the teaching and initiative of bishops and synods, and building on our best scholarship, believing that scriptural revelation must continue to illuminate, challenge and transform cultures, structures and ways of thinking;

4. nurture and respond to prophetic and faithful leadership and ministry to assist our Churches as courageous witnesses to the transformative power of the Gospel in the world.
5. pursue a common pilgrimage with other members of the Communion to discern truth, that peoples from all nations may truly be free and receive the new and abundant life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 The Life We Share with Others: Our Anglican Vocation

(Jeremiah 31.31-34, Ezekiel. 36.22-28, Matthew 28.16-20, John 17.20-24, 2 Corinthians 8-9, Ephesians 2:11-3:21, James 1.22-27)

We affirm that Communion is a gift of God: that His people from east and west, north and south, may together declare his glory and be a sign of God’s Kingdom. We gratefully acknowledge God’s gracious providence extended to us down the ages, our origins in the undivided Church, the rich history of the Church in the British Isles shaped particularly by the Reformation, and our growth into a global communion through the various mission initiatives.

As the Communion continues to develop into a worldwide family of interdependent churches, we also face challenges and opportunities for mission at local, regional, and international levels. We cherish our faith and mission heritage as offering us unique opportunities for mission collaboration, for discovery of the life of the whole gospel and for reconciliation and shared mission with the Church throughout the world.

The member Churches acknowledge that their common mission is a mission shared with other churches and traditions not party to this covenant. It is with all the saints that we will comprehend the fuller dimensions of Christ’s redemptive and immeasurable love.

We commit ourselves to answering God’s call to share in his healing and reconciling mission for our blessed but broken and hurting world, and, with mutual accountability, to share our God-given spiritual and material resources in this task.

In this mission, which is the Mission of Christ, **we commit ourselves**

1. to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God
2. to teach, baptize and nurture new believers;
3. to respond to human need by loving service;
4. to seek to transform unjust structures of society; and
5. to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

5 Our Unity and Common Life

(Numbers 11.16-20, Luke 22.14-27, Acts 2.43-47, 4.32-35, 1 Corinthians 11.23-26, 1 Peter 4:7-11, 5:1-11)

We affirm 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 and the central role of bishops as custodians of faith, leaders in mission, and as visible sign of unity.

We affirm the place of four Instruments of Communion which serve to discern our common mind in communion issues, and to foster our interdependence and mutual accountability in Christ. While each member Church orders and regulates its own affairs through its own system of government and law and is therefore described as autonomous, each church recognises that the member churches of the Anglican Communion are bound together, not juridically by a central legislative or executive authority, but by the Holy Spirit who calls and enables us to live in mutual loyalty and service.

Of these four Instruments of Communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury, with whose See Anglicans have historically been in communion, is accorded a primacy of honour and respect as first amongst equals (*primus inter pares*). He calls the Lambeth Conference, and Primates' Meeting, and is President of the Anglican Consultative Council.

The Lambeth Conference, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, expressing episcopal collegiality worldwide, gathers the bishops for common counsel, consultation and encouragement and serves as an instrument in guarding the faith and unity of the Communion.

The Primates' Meeting, presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury, assembles for mutual support and counsel, monitors global developments and works in full collaboration in doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters that have Communion-wide implications.

The Anglican Consultative Council is a body representative of bishops, clergy and laity of the churches, which co-ordinates aspects of international Anglican ecumenical and mission work.

6 Unity of the Communion

(*Nehemiah 2.17,18, Mt. 18.15-18, 1 Corinthians 12, 2 Corinthians 4.1-18, 13: 5-10, Galatians 6.1-10*)

Each Church commits itself

1. in essential matters of common concern, to have regard to the common good of the Communion in the exercise of its autonomy, and to support the work of the Instruments of Communion with the spiritual and material resources available to it.
2. to spend time with openness and patience in matters of theological debate and discernment to listen and to study with one another in order to comprehend the will of God. Such study and debate is an essential feature of the life of the Church as it seeks to be led by the Spirit into all truth and to proclaim the Gospel afresh in each generation. Some issues, which are perceived as controversial or new when they arise, may well evoke a deeper understanding of the implications of God's revelation to us; others may prove to be distractions or even obstacles to the faith: all therefore need to be tested by shared discernment in the life of the Church.

3. to seek with other members, through the Church's shared councils, a common mind about matters of essential concern, consistent with the Scriptures, common standards of faith, and the canon law of our churches.
4. to heed the counsel of our Instruments of Communion in matters which threaten the unity of the Communion and the effectiveness of our mission. While the Instruments of Communion have no juridical or executive authority in our Provinces, we recognise them as those bodies by which our common life in Christ is articulated and sustained, and which therefore carry a moral authority which commands our respect.
5. to seek the guidance of the Instruments of Communion, where there are matters in serious dispute among churches that cannot be resolved by mutual admonition and counsel:
 1. by submitting the matter to the Primates Meeting
 2. if the Primates believe that the matter is not one for which a common mind has been articulated, they will seek it with the other instruments and their councils
 3. finally, on this basis, the Primates will offer guidance and direction.
6. We acknowledge that in the most extreme circumstances, where member churches choose not to fulfil the substance of the covenant as understood by the Councils of the Instruments of Communion, we will consider that such churches will have relinquished for themselves the force and meaning of the covenant's purpose, and a process of restoration and renewal will be required to re-establish their covenant relationship with other member churches.

7 Our Declaration

(Psalms 46, 72.18,19, 150, Acts10.34-44, 2 Corinthians 13.13, Jude 24-25)

With joy and with firm resolve, we declare our Churches to be partners in this Anglican Covenant, releasing ourselves for fruitful service and binding ourselves more closely in the truth and love of Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory for ever. Amen.

Notes:

[1] This is not meant to exclude other Books of Common Prayer and Ordinals duly authorised for use throughout the Anglican Communion, but acknowledges the foundational nature of the Book of Common Prayer 1662 in the life of the Communion.

Editors Note:

The Report and the Covenant Draft text are also available to download as a PDF Document here:

http://www.aco.org/commission/d_covenant/downloads.cfm