



SUMMARY OF DIOCESAN SYNOD 2023

Synod is a representative body of the whole Diocese gathered under the leadership of the Bishop.

The Second Session of the Fifty-Seventh Synod of the Diocese was held in Holy Trinity Cathedral from 7-8 September 2023, commencing with a service in St Mary's-in-Holy Trinity at which Archbishop Sione Ulu'ilakepa of the Diocese of Polynesia was the preacher.

Bishop's Charge

In his Charge, Bishop Ross summarized activities from the past year while also outlining challenges ahead.

Partnerships: He spoke warmly of the partnerships existing within the Three Tikanga Church, especially rejoicing in Archbishop Sione's acceptance of a call to episcopal ministry. Partnership remained an important aspect of diocesan life, particularly with Te Pihopatana o Te Tai Tokerau.

Weather: Severe weather early in the year had adversely affected many and he thanked all who had provided assistance to others. Ministry units on the Coromandel had been regularly isolated, while access to the North had also been significantly disrupted by major road closures. Several church buildings had been damaged causing financial and emotional stress, while anxiety remained regarding the cost of repairs and insurance.

Social Justice Issues: The official establishment of Te Ohu Whakawhanaunga Tāmaki Makauru recently had served to highlight issues of poverty and homelessness which were expected to be to the fore during the lead up to the election. The Bishop also noted reports addressing abuse in the Church were due to be released shortly. While steps had been taken to address the issues raised at a whole of Church level, a responsibility at local level to ensure safety also remained.

Looking ahead: The Bishop spoke about challenges being faced across the Diocese – ageing congregations, declining attendances, juggling finances, managing compliance issues etc. He stressed most could not be solved centrally. Ministry units were “the primary place for our mission”, the place where we connect with our local communities and where relationships can be developed to allow the love of God to be shared so we can be part of the work of God's Kingdom. He focused on the concept of “Living Beyond Ourselves” with an emphasis on outreach and proclamation, the sharing of our faith through word and action. “Each of you is a strong part of the communities within which you live,” he said. “You know these communities. You know their needs, the ways in which healing might come to people and places and thus the opportunities for the Word of truth to find a place. Those are the mission opportunities which God opens up before you.”

And, so to Friday!

Diocesan Council: A report was presented covering activities over the past year, including the launch of the programme “Flourishing Life on Church Land” which encouraged biodiversity on church land. A review of Trust Investments Management Ltd (TIML) was presented and an opportunity made for questions about recent financial issues to be raised. Generally it was felt that progress was being made and new staff appointments should help to address these. Other issues relating to property concerns were also presented.

Bills and Motions: Only two bills were presented, one of which was a replacement statute for the Auckland City Mission. Of the seven motions, three sought assents to changes proposed by General Synod Te Hīnota

Whānui, while a fourth proposed a new Standing Resolution to be adopted. Another followed a presentation on overseas missions especially in the Pacific area and a target of \$190,000 was endorsed.

That left only two motions. The first sought support for lowering the voting age to sixteen for local and general elections, this motion being carried with a few dissenting voices. The other asking TIML to achieve a 0% threshold for fossil fuel investments as soon as possible and within twelve months was also supported.

Further to the Bishop's Charge: A wide-ranging discussion then took place following the issues the Bishop had raised in his Charge. The need for resources to support outreach and suggestions for collaboration and support were raised. It was noted that the Healthy Church Model captured the vision for the Diocese to develop effective local ministry units. The model is thus a helpful guide as to how ministry units could progress as its flexible model could be easily developed to meet local needs. The Synod was challenged to work at actively addressing the issues raised, particularly those of participation. A motion was passed encouraging all ministry units "to actively consider the mission opportunities that exist in each of our communities and to develop plans to respond". This was now the challenge for every ministry unit and indeed, each person, to meet!

The business completed, Synod closed earlier than planned so all were able to enjoy a Saturday holiday!