

Synod report 2019 – Reflections from a first-time parish rep.

“Take a book”, someone said. “Take a cushion” said another. “Archaic” said a past representative. I wasn’t sure what to expect, but it turned out to be none of those. Synod is an annual gathering of clergy and laity from all ministry units in our Diocese, to approve business which requires assent from members of our church, and all overseen by Bishop Peter and Chancellor (legal advisor) Jeremy Johnson. We enjoyed an amazing 2 days of worship, presentations, and fellowship, and the opportunity to network with Anglicans from Cheviot to Waimate. It was a privilege to represent you all at this gathering.

The “Boring” bits: Synod is the meeting where a lot of the legal statutes and canons which govern our Diocese are changed or reviewed. Under discussion this year were:

- Changing rules to allow the Church Property Trustees (CPT) to lend money to parishes as mortgages.
- Interim procedures when a parish is unable to appoint wardens or a full vestry.
- Unresolved questions about the best use of the proceeds from ministry unit asset sales – and supporting other parts of the diocese, and regeneration.
- Commissioning a review and update of the standards for clergy housing.
- Reporting on Diocesan finances (a \$135k surplus for 2018 due to a significant anonymous donation, but a forecast budget shortfall of \$26k for 2020). Diocesan income comes mostly from parish quotas, St John’s college grants, and income from the General Trust Estate (which is smaller than ideal). We were reminded that individual ministry units hold most of the Diocese’s funds – there is very little spare “central” funding available.
- Review of Title D, the disciplinary canon of the Anglican Church for licensed ministers, lay and ordained, in anticipation of intensified scrutiny following the Royal Commission into abuse in State Care and Faith-Based Institutions.
- 87% by number (72% by value) of earthquake repair projects completed. The target is to have the program completed by mid-2021.

The Exciting bits:

- Bishop Peter Carrell’s “charge” to synod - a forward-thinking vision for the diocese in 2030 and a change of strategic direction to “Regeneration”, encompassing: Making Disciples, Supporting Families, and Strengthening Communities. I urge you to read his entire speech which can be found at <http://anglicanlife.org.nz/download/here-49/> Bishop Peter mourned “the tear in the fabric of our fellowship” when 9 parishes, in part or whole, disaffiliated from our diocese during the past year but reminded us of God’s call to hope, faith and love amidst the pain. He congratulated the courageous efforts to rebuild congregational life.
- Uplifting presentations were heard from:
 - Roger Sutton, Anglican Missioner reaching out to the last, the least and the lost in our communities. I can’t wait until he extends his mission into the further reaches of the diocese, as he has promised, and shares with us how to reach out into our own community.
 - Matthew Mark, City Missioner, working alongside Roger Sutton in this well-known organisation with not only food banks (largest number of food parcels in NZ), op shops and a night shelter, but also an alcohol and drug detox centre, mental health counselling, and a learning and developmental hub.
 - Anglican Board of Missions - 100 years old this year supporting 40 mission partners both directly and through the NZ Church Missionary Society. Your mission donations are so important. And did you know your teenagers can consider a gap-year with the AMB ‘Better World’ programme?
 - Christchurch Cathedral Reinstatement Trust (CCRT) – an update on progress on the extremely complex task of reinstating our cathedral so it will look virtually the same from the outside as it did prior to the earthquakes, but inside will be warm, easier to use, seismically strong, sustainable, and have an enhanced interface with Cathedral Square. Design work and project planning is underway, and an announcement regarding consenting and anticipated cost is expected in March 2020.
- Establishment of an annual conference to support Wardens and Treasurers.
- Acceptance of a state of climate and ecological emergency.
- Election of our own parishioners to Diocesan committees:
 - David Prosser to Standing Committee
 - Sammy Mould to CPT and Diocesan Nomination Board
 - Ven Lynnette Lightfoot to the St Michael’s School Trust Board
 - Rev Toby Behan, our new vicar, as a delegate to General Synod in 202

The Challenges:

- To work for unity of purpose among ourselves, in our local communities, in our nation, and in our world. We can have no witness if the church itself is divided.
- To lighten the Diocesan property portfolio, where appropriate, to reduce the administrative burden which buildings impose.
- To share the good news in a language and manner which engages with today’s people.
- To be open to change in the way we do things within parishes so that church can be for those who do not currently attend (i.e. a culture and attitude change for us).