**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA**

**DIOCESE OF GIPPSLAND**



**38th SYNOD**

**SECOND SESSION**

**19 – 21 MAY 2017**

**BAIRNSDALE, VIC**

# President’s Address

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*19 May 2017*

**Welcome**

We acknowledge the Gunai Kurnai people as the original custodians of this land; the land between the mountains and the sea. We continue to commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation and recognition. In our every step may these words, ‘here I am, Lord’ land softly and with respect on the land and the story of those who have gone before.

Welcome to the Second Session of the 38th Synod of the Diocese of Gippsland. As often happens synod this year falls during the great Easter season of the Church’s year. Caught up as we are in the busyness of our everyday lives, it is too easy to leave the Easter cry, ‘Alleluia! Christ is Risen’ behind sometime around the second Sunday of Easter. The pattern which the Church in her wisdom has given us in the scriptures, songs and liturgical emphasis of Easter help slow this trend and correct this mistake. We are pointed again and again toward the witness of the resurrection community and the gospel stories which tell of the experience of the risen Lord in the infant church. In the 50 days of Easter the common lectionary of readings we are given every Sunday to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest include stories from the book of the Acts of the Apostles and the early Church’s growth into taking on the mantle of resurrection faith as they witness to the power and presence of the risen Lord Jesus Christ among them. It is not insignificant that we Christians were known first as followers of ‘The Way’. In Acts 9 Saul, on the verge of conversion, is described as breathing threats and murder against the disciples. As a Pharisee, he makes an alliance with the Sadducee high priest in Jerusalem aimed at strengthening the cause of religious purity. Damascus was a kind of checkpoint for pilgrims making their way to worship in the Temple in Jerusalem which made it a place of interest to Saul. A target for him seems to have been those he knows as ‘followers of the Way’. Acts 9 goes on to tell the story of Paul’s conversion. He is blinded by a light shining from heaven and a voice speaking directly to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ and which he answers, “Who are you Lord?” This is the beginning of Paul’s new life turned completely to Christ. It is dramatic. It is clear. It is a blinding conversion story which many of us haven’t experienced and some of us have longed for.

There’s another follower of the Way in Acts 9. Ananias, a disciple living in Damascus who also receives a vision from the Lord. His response is immediate and one which has been replicated by others throughout the history of God’s people. He says simply, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ The Lord is about to ask something significant of Ananias – something which he questions at first having heard of Saul’s reputation. There is a moment of fear that comes through the text, fear with which many 21st century followers of the risen Lord Jesus can identify. All around the world our sisters and brothers in Christ face adversity, threats and persecution. Ananias, like many today, is obedient to the voice he hears telling him to go to the very person who has declared himself an enemy of the people of the Way. His witness to those of us who deal with sneers and disinterest is a mirror before us exposing us. Yes, there is fear threaded through these verses from Acts, but there is also decision. Ananais says, ‘Here I am, Lord.’

**Diocesan Life**

Like all those who have walked the way before us, following in the footsteps of Ananais, including those who planted the church in this place, we too say, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ Not because it seemed like a good idea to me, not because it looked like a strategic decision, but simply because you called me, simply because you need witnesses and friends to seek your face and walk in your way.

Today is the 115th anniversary of the consecration of Arthur Wellesley Pain in St Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne. This year therefore marks the 115th anniversary of the Diocese of Gippsland. In the foundation of this Diocese and the ministry of its first Bishop we are each in some way part of the faithful response of those forebears who believed in God’s providence and grace for the mission of the Church in Eastern Victoria as they willingly responded to God’s call, ‘Here I am, Lord’.

I think of this response each time I go to St John the Evangelist in Cann River. Dedicated in 1928, St John’s was a gift to the Diocese from Miss Reece one of the medical sisters appointed by Bishop Cranswick to minister throughout Gippsland. St John’s is rarely used now apart from visitors on their way to Mallacoota or NSW who, drop in to visit the small timber church, and Sunday services. I wonder how many of them notice the photo in the porch of a woman who looks as though she’s wearing a white uniform, sitting astride a horse. The photo was taken some time in the mid 1920’s. It is Miss Reece one of those remarkable women who heard God’s call to them and responded, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ Sometimes when I am there we are 3 for the service. A few weeks ago I arrived looking forward to seeing the regulars and lo and behold they had been telling people in town that there would be a service that Sunday. We were 8, one of whom was a musician. Oh, and a gecko who is usually pleased to be at worship there!

 People in that part of the diocese talk about how the community has changed over the years. The changes that take place over generations in industries like timber have meant that a once thriving community now has much smaller populations and fewer job prospects.

Almost every parish in the diocese has felt the impact of changes in dairy farming, closures and downsizing in coal mining and the timber industry. In such times, it has been absolutely clear how deeply connected parishes are in their communities. Present in prayer, with grace to stand alongside and with practical care. Community connection is part of Anglican DNA.

This year also marks the 150th anniversary of the parish of St John the Baptist, Bairnsdale. Having come from a metropolitan Diocese this is my first experience of an ‘away’ Synod. I hear that there’s a saying among the clergy that the further you are from Sale the better, I hope that also means this will be a good meeting for us. Thank you to the Rector, The Revd Tony Wicking and Wardens and to the members of the parish for inviting us all to mark this sesquicentenary year with you and to join in the celebration.

The history of the Diocese written in 1947 by Albert E Clark *Church of our Fathers[[1]](#endnote-1)* says of Bairnsdale; “The earliest record I can find comes from the Church Gazette of March 1862, in which is a record of the Bishop’s tour in these words: ‘the 18th and 19th were spent in reaching and visiting Bairnsdale, at which place his Lordship held an evening service, when some 50 persons were collected together. The three following days were spent visiting Lindenow and Stathfieldsaye. Sunday 23rd found his Lordship at Stratford.’ This does not mean that here you have a record of the first service ever held in Bairnsdale. I doubt very much whether any record of that service exists, but one would be safe in saying that it was conducted by The Rev. E. G. Pryce, the first clergyman to visit Gippsland.”

In February 1867, a church committee was formed with representatives from Bairnsdale, Omeo, Lindenow Flats and Bruthen. In March of that year the Committee wrote to the Bishop of Melbourne with the promise of £200 and a house for The Reverend Amos Brazier who is listed as being the clergyman of the parish from 1867-1873.

150 years later people here continue to respond to human need and God’s call. The proposal and development of Hope Restart Centre is one example. This dream for a residential rehabilitation center in East Gippsland has come to life through Peter and Margaret Down. Having heard from one young woman of the devastation of her life particularly through the drug ice, and the transformation she has made in the grace and loving faith of Christ, they have begun a process which we hope will come to fruition for the wellbeing of young people, of families and of the whole community. ‘Here I am, Lord’ [[2]](#endnote-2)

The area of the parish in which we are meeting is one of the 3 campuses of Gippsland Grammar School. I thank Mr Baker, Mrs Virginia Evans and all the staff for their welcome and hospitality. The school is situated immediately adjacent to Clifton Waters Retirement Living. For Synod members who have not yet visited there will be an opportunity to see more of Clifton Waters during lunch. Clifton Waters was established in 1953. Since then it has offered affordable retirement living in the environment of a supportive community setting to people in East Gippsland. Retirement Living and Aged Care are sectors facing significant change in the face of government and industry regulations and requirements. CEO Lee Jameson and her team do a remarkable job in challenging times and we are grateful to them for the strength of purpose and deep sense of community fostered within the Village. The Gippsland Anglican Retirement Living (GARL) Board have been working to bring a plan for the development and sustainability of Clifton Waters into the future. Mr Neil Taylor retired as Chair of the Board in April. We thank Neil for all he has brought to this role. Consultants One Fell Swoop and members of the GARL board met with Finance Committee and Trust Corporation in April to put forward the proposal approved by GARL. This proposal has very significant implications, both in terms of financial commitment and in terms capacity to undertake such a major project, and conscious that this matter sits alongside other plans and hopes for mission. The diocese is currently undertaking due diligence. This issue is one of major significance for the diocese. The report of GARL set out in Section 3 of your papers speaks to this.

2016 marked the 160th anniversary of the consecration of Christ Church Tarraville. A wonderful day of community celebrations organized by the parish of Yarram in conjunction with the local community and historical society saw people from around Victoria return to the site of the oldest wooden church building in the State to celebrate. Congratulations to The Reverend Jo White, the churchwardens and members of the parish for the day. Churches like Christ Church are a mixed blessing. Services are no longer held there on a regular basis, there is no township anymore to speak of, and the church is a bit off the ‘beaten track.’ But this church is part of the narrative of the church in Gippsland and of people of faith who desired to mark the life they were making in this part of the world with a building in which they could gather to sing praise, to pray, to celebrate the sacraments of Holy Communion, of marriage, of baptism and from which their loved ones might be buried. Without doubt those who built Christ Church as well as that first committee in Bairnsdale meeting in 1867 were also saying, ‘Here I am, Lord.’

**Jesus Christ Here and Now for Gippsland 2017-2020**

 These pioneers knew themselves as part of a bigger story, the story of God’s loving creation and salvation. We human beings need a bigger story. And to locate ourselves in that story an unfolding of the psalmist’s song of praise, ‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom’. (Psalm 111:10) I believe we all need to find our place in God’s story of love for the world, and God’s loving story of the world. God’s faith in and for us. The loss of a shared story is one reason why people are so isolated and uncertain about who they are and how they belong. Shared story gives shared meaning. Rabbi Lord Jonathon Sacks said recently, ‘we live in a world where people have a maximum of choice and a minimum of meaning.’ [[3]](#endnote-3) Think about it in relation to the issues in front of the church today, or in relation to the increasing number of people whose family story is hanging by a thread. Shared story gives meaning, shared meaning.

Part of the shared story of the Diocese of Gippsland since 2013 is the Strategic Direction, or the Mission Plan *Jesus Christ Here and Now for Gippsland*. Work began on this in 2011 before it came to Synod in 2012 for further discussion. It was then rounded out and has been widely used across the Diocese since 2013.

Last year I signaled that it had almost reached its 2017 timeline and that we would take time to consider both how it has been used, by whom, and how parishes have found it as a tool for planning mission in your place. In October, The Revd Trevor Smith facilitated consultations in each of the regions. Since that time smaller groups have been working to bring together an outline for our shared mission over the next three years. They revealed some wonderful insights. And what has come through loud and clear from these consultations and conversations is that for Gippsland Anglicans in almost every parish the focus of ministry over these past few years has been making community connections. Many programs that have begun and run inside churches have been planned to invite people from the community into church, or to meet a community need. In her report to the Annual meeting of the co-operating parish of Churchill, Boolarra and Yinnar The Revd Brenda Burney wrote about one of these consultations, ‘Most parishes had worked hard at engaging with people in their communities but thought that we needed to go deeper into those relationships and provide more opportunities for people to respond in faith ton Jesus Christ.’[[4]](#endnote-4)

Since October smaller groups have been working to draw that information together and bring to Synod a direction for mission over the next three years. This doesn’t mean that the good things that people are doing should stop. Nor does it mean that everything outlined will be taken on by every parish. But it does point to some next steps for prayer, planning and programs. So, we’re great at community connection. But, we asked ourselves, how are those connections being developed to help us get better and telling the story, of creating spaces in which people can hear the story of God’s love and find themselves within it. How is our reaching out helping people step across the threshold of the church, across the threshold of faith into the transforming love of Christ? How do we help people come to their own response to God in Christ to hear God’s love calling to them and to say, ‘Here I am, Lord?’

The Mission Plan has three headings to play with, to take up and take on. It has dot points just waiting to be expanded in your local context. It is permission giving rather prescriptive. It’s a page that I believe we can all get on together and the learn together.

Archdeacon Graham Knott will say more about this and there will be time for some table conversation to help bring a shape to the final plan.

So, with a vision that is, ‘Growing in Christ into the fullness of human life and inviting others to go with us on the journey.’

And some headings  *Faithfully* growing in Christ as we…..

 *Generously* inviting others as we…..

 *Celebrating* this journey together as we…..

As I said last year, our missionary call means learning afresh how and where to enter the culture we are trying to reach in the love of Jesus. However you take up these directions and shape them into your own plan my prayer and hope is that they will form part of your own response to God to say, ‘Here I am, Lord.’

**People**

All of us rejoice today in saying, Here I am, Lord with Deacon David Perryman to be ordained Priest in St Paul’s Cathedral on 10 June. David, his wife Emma and their two sons have moved to Stratford. He has a dual role as the Curate-in Charge of the parish of Avon alongside a new role as my chaplain. David is a great addition to the registry team and I am learning a lot about an age group largely lost to the church.

All of us also rejoice in saying ‘Here I am, Lord’ with The Very Reverend Susanna Pain who came to St Paul’s Cathedral as Rector and Dean of Sale in September. Susanna and her husband Nikolai have settled quickly into the life of the Diocese and l know that the Cathedral congregations along with the rest of us give thanks for her leadership and imaginative, pastoral ministry. Nikolai has been snapped up by Gippsland Grammar School and also gives of himself in ministry within the Cathedral parish. It is wonderful to have two such able and mature priests among us.

In August, the parish of Maffra welcomed The Reverend Janet Wallis as Priest-in Charge. The people of St John’s were patient and faithful as they waited for their new priest. Janet’s quiet but clear sense of being called to this ministry and community is another way in which we have witnessed the wholehearted response to God, ‘Here I am, Lord. Janet and Peter have made their home in Maffra which is a part of Gippsland they knew already. They are reconnecting with locals and offering hospitality whenever the opportunity arises.

Mrs Cathrine Muston accepted appointment as Anglicare Community Development Parish Partnerships. Cathrine comes to this role after many years in education, most recently at St Paul’s Anglican Grammar in Warragul. She is getting around to parishes, listening and speaking and sharing the story of your place and the community connection opportunities there. Cathrine is supported through the Diocese and Anglicare and meets regularly with a particular partnerships group. Cathrine too is inviting us and every faith community to say, ‘Here I am, Lord’- here not to judge, but to listen, here to love you, here to serve you, carrying the light of Christ into every dark place.

There are ongoing locum ministry needs at either end of the Diocese and I am so grateful for the clergy those who have spent time at Croajingalong, The Revd Ken Parker at Bunyip and Bishop Jeffrey Driver at Tambo who are helping enable and encourage people in each of those parishes as they give voice in their communities to the story of the risen Lord which gives meaning to lives and life. Once again, ‘Here I am, Lord’ means the crucified and raised Redeemer is really present, transforming everything he touches, and all who touch him.

Last year The Revd Jenny Ramage decided it was time to retire and said farewell to the parish of Korumburra- Poowong. However, it wasn’t long before she was out of retirement and is currently working part time in youth and children’s ministry in the parish of Drouin. Not even one Synod missed Jenny!

This Synod will, however, be the last for The Revd Greg Magee. Greg has announced his retirement and will finish in fulltime ministry in the parish of Bass-Philip Island in July. Greg and Fay are moving inland and will make their home in the Diocese of Bendigo. They go with our prayers, our love and our thanks to God for the ministry and ministries they have each held in the Diocese over many years.

The Revd Anne Turner is moving to Canberra at the end of May to be closer to family. Anne’s ministry in Sale, Avon and as Community Leader and a soul carer of the Anam Cara community has made a significant mark on the life of the Diocese. Anne’s ministry while distinctly her own has also been part of the team long known as Anne and Brian.

Bishop Arthur Jones and his wife Claudette have returned to Australia from Manila and are living in Traralgon.

Bishop Jeffrey Driver and his wife Lindy returned to Gippsland from Adelaide late last year and have made their home in Bairnsdale. They each been busy with individual projects in Papua New Guinea and South Sudan.

Jan McIntyre returned to Gippsland earlier this year after travelling overseas for a period and has made her home in Warragul.

Jenny and Greg and Fay, along with others who are making significant transitions, each in their own distinctive ways show us how saying, ‘Here I am, Lord’ becomes a way of life, a pattern of open heartedness and open handedness which is never lost, however much circumstances might change.

My thanks to our Registrar, Brian Norris for all that he manages and oversees in the Registry office. The increase in regulation and compliance in every area has been very demanding in the last twelve months and has required close attention. Along with this he has a bishop who often says, “I’ve been thinking”. Brian, Annette, Kellie, and Sue along with Tim Gibson in Archives and my chaplain David Perryman ensure that the Registry, often the first face of the Diocese, is welcoming and efficient. They are all especially good at taking on ‘other matters as required’. Thank you.

The Archdeacons and Regional Deans each take on extra responsibilities for the wider diocese. This year Canon Barbara Logan decided it was time to step down from her role as Regional Dean of the Eastern Deanery. Barb has also indicated that she will not be standing for re-election to bishop in Council. We thank Barb for the care she has given in these roles over a number of years. I am grateful to The Revd Lyndon Philips for accepting appointment as Regional Dean of the Eastern Region.

**The Diocese of Gahini**

Next Sunday Archdeacon Manasseh Gahima from our partner Diocese of Gahini in Rwanda will be ordained a bishop. Archdeacon Philip Muston will represent the Diocese of Gippsland and we send with him the assurance of our prayers for Manasseh and his wife Rose and their family as well as Bishop Alexis and the whole Diocese of Gahini. Phil will take with him the gift of a Pectoral Cross from his friends here in Gippsland including the Diocese, the Grammar and St Paul’s. A new day for Manasseh’s response to God. ‘Here I am, Lord.’ We will also send our greeting to Bishop Alexis in his continued leadership and ministry in the church.

**RIP**

Not even death extinguishes the life of the true Vine growing in us, as resurrection hope fills our hearts in remembering those we love but see no longer.

Today we remember some of those people lay and ordained who each said, ‘Here I am, Lord’ offering ministry in many ways and places and who have died in the past year.

Marilyn Wicking who died of lymphoma in October last year after 12 short months. Marilyn and Tony had been in parishes in the Dioceses of Melbourne and Bendigo as well as Gippsland, specifically here at Bairnsdale.

Brian Turner who lost his battle with mesothelioma and died at home in November 2016. In Gippsland Brian served as Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral, Rector of the parish of Avon and was a great friend of the Anam Cara community.

The Reverend Bill Dalling died at age 92. Ordained in Gippsland in 1956, he served as priest in the parishes of Newborough and Omeo

Mr Keith Dann; Warden, Treasurer and Synod Representative from the parish of Westernport

Mr Tim Stevens Lay Reader and leader from the parish of Heyfield

Mrs Grace Gray lifetime member of the Cathedral

Mr Peter Anderson, Lay Reader, Warden, Lay Secretary of Synod from the parish of Wonthaggi- Inverloch

Mrs Pam Schmack lifelong member of St Paul’s Cathedral Sale, Lay Canon, Pastoral Assistant, leader

Mrs Pam Clay Lay Reader from the Cathedral parish who lived and worshipped primarily at Loch Sport

Mr Edward Fisher OAM Anglican member of the Tarwin Lower Union church, member Parish Council, Bishop in Council and Trustee

We also remember Graeme and Jenny Mc Robb’s son Mick, and Philip Muston’s father Bishop Ged

Marie Braham, the mother of the Viv Braham our Diocesan solicitor

In recent time the Registry office staff Annette, Sue and Kellie have each had close loved ones die or receive a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness

Rest Eternal Grant to them, O Lord

***And may light perpetual shine upon them***

**Synod Business**

Harder to recognize, perhaps, is the truth that good order in the church is yet another way of saying ‘Here I am, Lord’ with faith and integrity, and putting this reality into practice in effective and caring ways. The Bishop in Council report highlights several matters which have had the attention of members of that body, the Finance Committee and the Trust Corporation across the year. I acknowledge and thank every member of those councils and committees for their diligence and care in the challenges of the past year. After some years as the Chair of the Finance Committee The Hon John Delzoppo has resigned from that role and Mr David Gittins has taken on this new role. John’s leadership has been of immense value to the diocese over this time and we thank him. I also want to especially thank the Chancellor and members of the Professional Standards working group for all they have brought to our consideration of Professional Standards legislation in preparation for this session of Synod. The legislative issues we have had before us are detailed and complex. The Professional Standards Legislation in this Synod is not the Provincial legislation adopted by the Dioceses of Melbourne and Bendigo as we anticipated last year. The legislation before us is, however, based on General Synod model legislation. Twelve Dioceses around the country have passed legislation based on this model and after consideration we have felt this the best path for Gippsland now. No doubt General Synod in September will invite us to further consideration and I expect that we will see amendments and advances in this area over the next few years.

Much of this has been done in the context of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Some of the most damning public hearings have involved the Anglican Church and we are all diminished by this terrible chapter in the life of the Church. The awful truth we must confess is our ability to glibly say, ‘Here I am, Lord’ without ever bringing forth new life. On the contrary we have been ‘outed’ as an institution capable of bringing destruction and unthinkable damage to human lives. In April, the Commission published the analysis of complaints of child sexual abuse received by the Anglican Church dioceses in Australia. [[5]](#endnote-5)This information was collected from a survey of all 23 dioceses. 22 of the 23 dioceses reported receiving one or more complaints of child sexual abuse between 1980 and 2015. There were 1,085 complainants and 1,119 reported complaints in this time. 75% of complainants were male and 25% female. The average time that had elapsed between the alleged abuse taking place and the date of the complaint was 29 years. These revelations have righty shocked us and shaken the trust of Anglicans as well as the wider community in the leadership of the church. The Royal Commission has brought this shame into the full light of community scrutiny and focused on places in which people who have used their power, used it to abuse all trust.

This is of course precisely what Royal Commissions are charged to do, to expose what has been hushed up, letting in the painful, healing light of day. Now that the Commission’s work has finished and we await it’s report to be released later this year, the Church will be judged once more. This time by the credibility of our response. Not being seen to do the ‘right’ thing, not as a public relations exercise, but in terms of truth. Some of the questions that travel with us into the future are about how we are to live now? How are we to live more humbly and openly and truthfully? How do we care for individuals without simply falling into the trap of protecting the institution? How can we look more like the Jesus of the gospels who cared for and stood for the vulnerable rather than those who occupy places of influence and power? How is the living Lord Christ to live among us and in us without our sin and frailty crucifying him all over again? And how do we give expression to Christ’s love and mercy and justice and at the same time reject the temptation to become part of a mob seeking targets to blame.

These are not straightforward questions. There are no easy answers. There are no quick fixes. Nor should there be. The stories told to the Commission by survivors has made this crystal clear. The next period for us in Gippsland means continuing to develop and adopt safe ministry screening requirements. It means requiring leaders and all who work with children to attend Safe Church and other training days regularly. It means learning and knowing what the seven child safe standards[[6]](#endnote-6) are that the Victorian government has introduced and putting them into practice. It means educating and being vigilant. Getting the balance right will take time. As we navigate our way through all this we do need to tread carefully, fixing our attention not so much on the loudest voices, but on the still small voice of our crucified and living savior who calls us to still higher standards.

Listening for and to the ‘still small voice’ seems a monumental task in the face of all this. The curtain that has been drawn back has revealed that the church has been as good at if not better than others in ignoring and denying that such terrible things have happened. The culture of self-interest and protection of the institution has been revealed and it doesn’t look like Jesus. We have heard these or similar words many times over since the Commission began its work. ‘It didn’t happen. I didn’t know. I wasn’t told.’ And perhaps even worse, ‘Well, it might have happened but it wasn’t all bad. Perhaps they even liked it. It’s what happened to all the boys.’ These are attitudes we have met at other times too. Most often they lurk in life’s dark corners of domestic violence, of rape, of violence used against people because of color or race or sexual identity. Attitudes like those implying that women need their husbands or partners to show them ‘who’s boss’, or that women who wear certain kinds of clothes were ‘just begging for it’, or that all Aboriginal people will end up in trouble because ‘they don’t know any better’, or that because homosexuality is a disgrace they need it ‘knocked out of them’.

Somehow, we have allowed such attitudes to become normalized, we have turned away, and in doing so such violence is made the victim’s fault.

As a bishop, I would rather an easy time in the life of the Church in which to exercise a ministry of leadership and oversight, however we’re not living back in some imagined golden era of another age. And the Holy Spirit is ripping through our life and our lives with the force of a cyclone for repentance and renewal. That’s our season.

Am I angry at those who have perpetrated these crimes? Yes. Am I perplexed at the failure of response by the church that nurtured my faith so well? Yes. Am I aware of some of the insidious ways in which I have been groomed to diminish harm? Yes. Am I challenged in walking a fine line between trust and suspicion? Yes. We all are. But, this is the season in which we are being called to give an account of the faith within us. Who we are. Why we believe. What the good news of Jesus is that we know and want to tell and live. The bible shows us God’s love in the human face of Jesus, and that love highlights the need for the most vulnerable to be cared for, protected, raised up. They have a special place in the heart of God’s story of grace and loving welcome.

 In all this we are not alone. We are in the company of each other and that unsettling, gusty and renewing Holy Spirit who has, can and does blow us as we are willing to change and renew. If we are listening prayerfully, quietly for the still voice beyond and in the middle of all of these things, what does it mean for us then to say, ‘Here I am, Lord?’

Other legislation before the Synod deals with Superannuation, Episcopal Standards, The Parish Administration Act and The Abbey where among much celebration work has begun on the reception building as part of the first stage of the much-anticipated John McIntyre centre. We will hear more from Archdeacon Edie Ashley when the Abbey report and Abbey legislation is brought.

A wise member of a Diocesan legal committee once told me that the legislation Synods consider is meant to be enabling of our life, so that the mission of the Church can be lived more effectively. That is part of the reason that Synods are essential to our life. More than that Synod is a constitutional obligation for Anglicans. We don’t live in isolated congregational settings but in a wider community of clergy and lay people together, taking council, deliberating, debating, prayerful considering how to ensure our frameworks are safe enough for the space we need to live more and more into the people Christ is shaping us into.

The parish notes for the Sundays of Easter in one parish read, ‘To be a risen church doesn’t mean to be perfect. It means to be a church sharing the resurrection of the Lord convinced that this is the way to be fully human and fully alive. The church then, isn’t just a struggling human institution. Its true identity is as part of the reality of the risen Christ. Its value depends on our living in Christ and in his resurrection and just letting ourselves float in that enormous and mysterious reality.’[[7]](#endnote-7)

May our resounding response to the Easter God be, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ And as Anglicans living through and into God’s call to us I pray that in one voice our response will be

‘Here we are, Lord.’

Alleluia! Amen!

1. *The Church of our Fathers* Albert E Clark. Rialto Press, Collins St Melbourne, 1947 pp166-167 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Hope Restart Centre on You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsYqE_aVw00> [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. rabbisacks.org/finding-moral-compass-challenging-times discussion with David Brooks March 2017 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The Co-operating Parish of Churchill, Boolarra and Yinnar, *Annual Report for 2016.* The Revd Brenda Burney [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse- *Analysis of complaints of child sexual abuse received by Anglican Church Dioceses in Australia – April 2017* p12 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www.childsafestandards.org.au/the-7-standards/> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Parish Notes Korumburra & Poowong Sundays after Easter- May 2017 The Revd Amy Turner [↑](#endnote-ref-7)