



Anglican Diocese of
BENDIGO



The
Bishop's Vision

2019-2022

Making sense of the puzzle

Life can often feel like we are trying to put together a puzzle without any idea of what the finished picture is supposed to look like. Sometimes it is easy to put together. The pattern on the surface is clear and the tabs join simply with the slots. Other times we cannot recognise the pattern and the tabs just do not fit.

Being able to see the picture of the completed puzzle makes all the difference to our chances of success and the enjoyment we derive from putting it together. This is amplified when working with others. As soon as another person is invited to share in the work their unique way of seeing how things fit emerge. If living is like putting together a puzzle it makes sense to know the picture we are trying to create; especially if we need to work together.

Living as disciples of Jesus means that we have the privilege of knowing God's big picture for the world as well as being invited to find our own stories in this big picture. As the words of scripture unfold we can see God moving the world from creation to new creation. We see the pain and fracture caused by our rebellion against God's rule. The interpreted history of others gives us a school to discover who God is, what God likes and how God works. In Jesus' life, death and resurrection God confronts our rebellion, dismisses its penalty, and draws the sting of its consequence. Yet, at this point we discover that the story encompasses even us.

In Jesus' work for us we have passed the tipping point of history, but do not yet enjoy the fulfilment of all that he has won. We inhabit the 'in-between' time when God's kingdom is now but not yet. Being 'in-between' may seem like a waiting room, or a place simply to pass the time, however we discover that God has chosen to call us as co-workers. Fancy that, God does not need us to achieve his purposes, but ennobles us by making us part of his work. So, when we pray "Your Kingdom come..." we are not only asking God to hasten the day when the work begun in Jesus is fulfilled, but that we would be strengthened in playing our part as witnesses to God's work.

God has given us the role of bearing witness to the work of Jesus so that the world may know and love God. Since coming to trust in Jesus relies on the enabling power of the Holy Spirit our part is to *worship* God as Lord and bear *witness* to the reality that God has redeemed all things in Jesus. As we worship and witness to the sufficiency of Jesus in our lives two things happen: God is glorified and continues to complete the work he begun in Jesus bringing the new creation to fulfilment.



My dream

My dream is that there is a congregation of people worshipping God in every community in the Diocese, bearing witness to God's love for the world in Jesus.

My dream is the third link in a chain. It derives from our diocesan vision which is to ... *transform society through the gospel of Jesus Christ by building healthy mission-shaped faith communities* (<http://bendigoanglican.org.au/about/vision-and-mission/>)...and builds upon the Strategic Plan which sets priorities for us as we work together to ensure that there are people of God, happy and healthy in their faith, throughout the Diocese.

God's toolbox

It should not be surprising that the same God who has given so much to make us sons and daughters would also give us the tools to be co-workers, a holy priesthood.

Paraclete: The Holy Spirit

The first and best gift that God has given to equip us is his own Spirit. Again, this should not be a surprise as Jesus promised that although he had to leave the first disciples the Father would send an 'encourager' and 'advocate' to be with us (*paraclete* means 'encourager', 'advocate', or 'intercessor' and is the Greek word used to describe the Spirit). This Spirit would guide us into all truth, grow the character of Christ within us, help us to know what to say when confronted about our faith, and make our hearts burn with a passion for all that God desires, to name just a few things!

If we are to worship God well and be faithful witnesses of God's work, we need the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit. This is true for each of us as individuals, but it is also true of us together as the Diocese of Bendigo.

It is my desire that we may be known as people who plan and act only in the power of God's Spirit. Too often we rely on our own cleverness, wealth, or strength. To worship God well we must rely on God well. I hope that we will be people made winsome because we start to look like Jesus, and this is only possible through the Spirit's patient work.

Let us keep in step with the Spirit as without the Spirit's work all that we endeavour will fail. As we are lead and enabled by the Spirit we will continue to discover the resources we need to grow worshipping and witnessing communities.

People

Too often we look around those sitting beside us in the pews and miss the enormous gift God has given us. You are part of the plan to bring in God's kingdom – not because I say so, but because God has decided that he will use you. This is true of me, and the person sitting beside you in church, and even the frail or weak one sitting beside them. God has decided that the church will be the body of Christ. This is true for the church as it is, not as some idealised group in which all people seem strong and attractive.

We are sisters and brothers, called to the one family and endowed with the same Spirit. God has given us a great resource in each other! Too often we wish for more money, or better experts, or a different situation. However, God has given us each other with our gifts and capacities, weaknesses and vulnerabilities, to show his sufficiency in our lives.

It is my hope that we will spend time caring for each other, building each other up, and nurturing each other's faith in Jesus. Our world is short on kindness and an 'other person centred' way of life.

Our world is restless and desperate for news that is beautiful and full of life. As we seek to help each other grow in the likeness of Jesus, telling each other the great news of God made flesh, and helping each other to reach out with love and good deeds, then we will become winsome to a weary world. Indeed, our very weakness and ordinariness becomes what God uses to show a watching world that his way is beautiful and good.

Let us love and honour each other for it is by this love that all people will know that we are Jesus' disciples. As we love one another our worship 'grows legs and walks', becoming a winsome witness to a weary world.

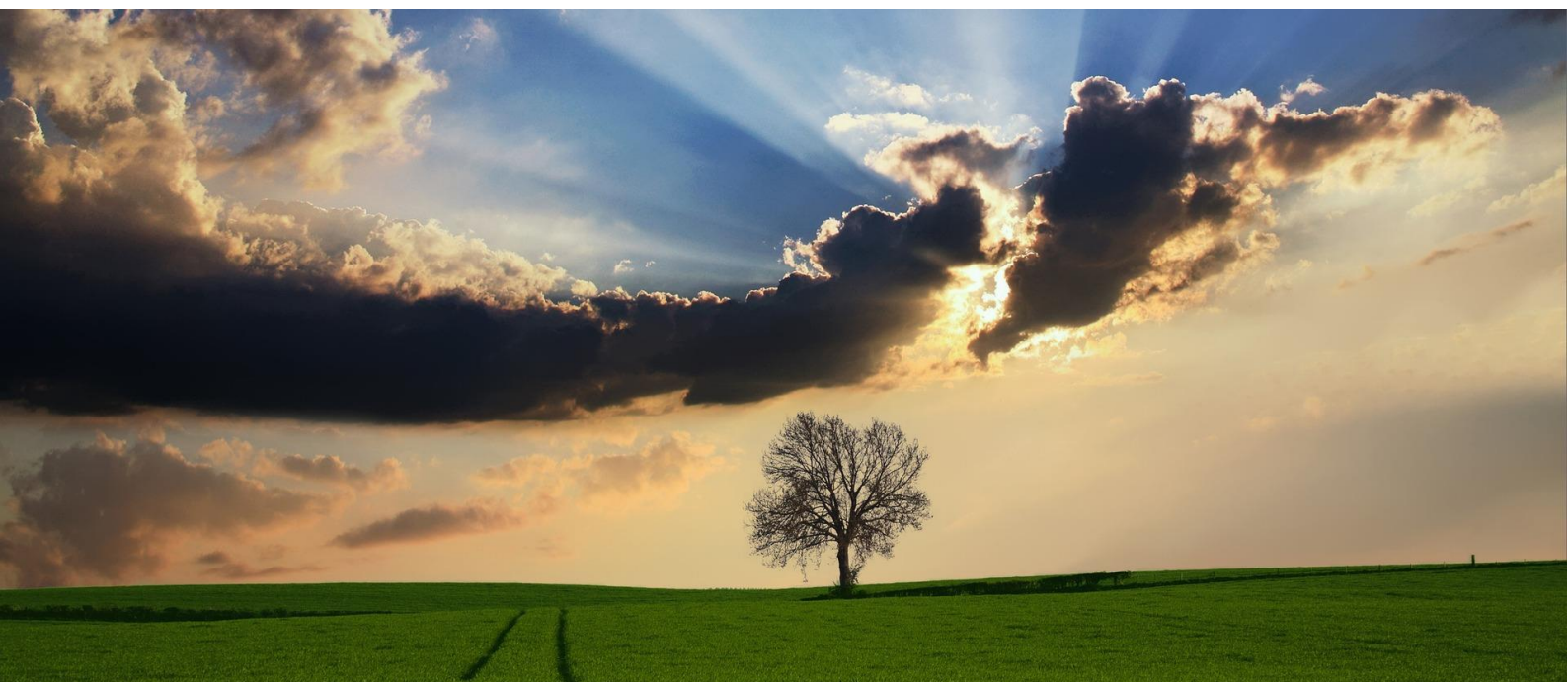
Property: places and finance

We have inherited many physical resources. We are the guardians of a legacy left through the hard work of those who have gone before us. This legacy can be summarised as the money and property held in trust. We meet in the buildings and receive income from the finances left to us by others. This is a blessing we should not underestimate.

One danger in receiving physical and financial assets is that we guard them jealously; wishing to preserve them in the state received. Another danger is that we see them as expendable, ready to be disposed of in the present with no thought to the future. Too often we simply receive these resources without asking ourselves what they are for.

I have learned that the property and finances we hold in trust must be approached in the same way as a traveler preparing for a journey. That is, we must ask if they have become lead in the saddle bags or bread for the journey. We are not owners of the assets that God has allowed us to accumulate, but rather stewards who have the responsibility to use them wisely as we continue to journey on to God's new creation. This will mean that we can choose to sell and spend some as we discharge old debts (like paying redress for abuse and recognising the dispossession of our First Peoples) or adapt to new patterns of ministry. It will also mean that we save some, knowing that those who follow us will need bread for their journey.

Let us be good stewards of our assets thankful that God has given us bread for the journey. As we care for what we have been given may it serve our journey rather than weigh us down.



Life together

If we are to be effective participants in God's kingdom we need to work together as members of the one body. Just as a body needs to be coordinated in its action, so we need to ensure that our action together is coordinated and works well as a whole.

We are blessed to share in a diocese in which the organisational structures are clear, simple and robust. I am grateful for the work done by those before me, especially Bishop Andrew Curnow, and those who administer the structures that hold our life of worship and witness, namely Naomi Fountain (and Anne Baker before her) and the Registry team. The patterns of organisation and relationship that have been instituted navigate the demands of the contemporary world well while being suitable for a family of congregations living in regional Australia.



Local

We share the call of Christ with others throughout the world and across the ages. Consequently, each of our churches is not complete, yet, we are nothing less than local expressions of God's world-wide family. So, while incomplete, each local manifestation of God's church is precious and beautiful. You will have seen that my dream is that there is a congregation of people who worship God in every community in the Diocese. Each congregation that meets to worship God, to bear witness to Jesus' redeeming acts in word and deed, and to show out God's love is the beating heart of the Diocese. It is primarily through and from our congregations that God's life is ministered.

While every one of our approximately 70 congregations is beautiful and the heartbeat of the Diocese, none is sufficient as God's church on its own. Each of our 32 parishes provide the first step in 'holding' congregations so that they may share in worship and witness with others who are nearby. This occurs in two ways:

1. Providing for ministry – It is neither likely nor healthy that any one congregation 'owns' a minister. As congregations work together to provide the resources to allow for ministers to be deployed they enable the provision of people called, trained and authorised to help them grow as disciples of Jesus. We are all 'a holy priesthood' and equal in God's family. Yet God has gifted some to be pastors, teachers, and servants of the church. As congregations collaborate they allow for these servants to be placed in their midst to help them worship and bear witness well.
2. Coordinating activity and distributing resources – A great strength of the Anglican way of being church is that we look at districts and ask, 'what do we need to do to reach all of the people here?' As congregations of people work together to serve their districts they are being faithful to God's call to 'Go out into all the world'. Accordingly, the Mission Action Planning we do is best done when congregations collaborate to discover the needs of their communities and work together to be agents of God's redeeming work. Similarly, the organisational demands of living together are best met when congregations work together. The keeping of buildings, attending to financial needs, preparing for safe ministry and sharing

in oversight should not be replicated time and time again by each congregation, but becomes part of the work of the whole.

But we have an opportunity to press out further!

Regional

Looking beyond our local communities, and even the parish which may encompass several like communities, means we can collaborate across large regions. Our Diocese 'holds' the ministries of each of the approximately 70 congregations gathered in 32 parishes. Through the Diocese we can care for, coordinate and consolidate ministries. Just as stronger members of a household assist the weaker, and each member of a family takes up their own role for the good of others, so a diocese allows the local congregations to work together sharing the gifts of a fuller expression of God's kingdom.

By being placed under the care of a bishop our parishes and their congregations have the practical opportunity to relate across the Diocese, and with the worldwide church. This broadens our horizons and helps to knock off some of our parochial 'sharp edges'. The care entrusted to the bishop also extends to our connection with the church through the ages. One challenge in living in the present is that we become consumed with the demands of the here-and-now. The bishop should be drawing us back to our anchor in Jesus and reminding us of the historic expression of our faith through every age. I think that there is much to be comforted and excited by in remembering our connection with the historic, worldwide church. It reminds us that we are not alone and bear a hope that transcends all things. Yet there are also times when effective care will challenge us. There are times when we need to do difficult things if we are to return to our roots.

Gladly the bishop does not work alone! The Bishop's Office and Registry team assists in providing coordination in the worship and witness of the diocese. Just as the parishes 'hold' local congregations so that they can worship and witness well the corporations and committees of the Diocese serve the whole family. We have two corporations. The Bendigo Anglican Diocesan Corporation looks after the day to day ministry and activity of the parishes and diocese. The Bendigo Diocesan Trust Corporation holds the property and financial assets of the parishes and diocese and is responsible for ensuring that the assets we steward are used legally, strategically and faithfully. As the Registry staff and volunteers who act as officers of the corporations administer the activities and assets of the Diocese they do so on my behalf, and yours! We are a family and our action together is made possible as we work together. This sounds obvious but being a family is only made real as we cooperate on practical details. This is not simply a pragmatic or 'business' decision but is the practical expression of placing value in each other and being prepared to share in one another's lives.

Another value of our Anglican way of being Christian is that we expect that worship and witness should endure across our dioceses. Another way of saying this is that ministry should not be restricted to times and places where charismatic individuals can provide leadership (both lay and ordained). We have inherited a fantastic legacy of faithful, brave and sacrificial service throughout the entirety of our diocese. We have also inherited a structure that allows us to reach back into or pioneer new ministries in places where Christian worship and witness has fallen away. In other words, we can consolidate worship and witness across a whole region, rather than be wafted by the breeze. This is exemplified by our Ordained Pioneer Ministers (OPMs) who lead pastoral and missional work into communities who rarely engage with church. Our diocesan Strategic Plan (<http://www.bendigoanglican.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Strategic-Plan-2017-2019.pdf>) clearly and simply sets intentional targets for us to be working on to allow for the growth of new communities of faith throughout the whole diocese.

I am also blessed to have a fine group of clergy and lay leaders working with me to help you be happily and healthily engaged in worship and witness where you live. My priority is for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT - the Dean, Archdeacons, Ministry Development Officer and Registrar) to help us all remain focused on decisions that support local ministry, enable the sharing of gifts and leadership, and promote the wise stewardship of the assets God has given us so that there is a congregation of people worshipping God in every community in the Diocese, bearing witness to God's love for the world in Jesus.

Challenges

Being a Christian in contemporary Australia means facing a range of challenges. Sometimes it can feel that being an Anglican Christian is nothing but a trial! While it is true that we face some acute challenges, we must be careful to remember two realities.

The first is that all Christians in every age have faced difficulty in their individual and corporate life. It is part and parcel of living as flawed people with other flawed people in a flawed world that does not experience unity with God. This memory brings us to the second reality. That is, we often experience challenge as a vague, undifferentiated but powerful sense. As we break down the sources of the difficulties it becomes easier to tame the anxiety that comes with challenge and envision a way to address problems.

I think that we face seven particular challenges as we seek to bear witness to God's love to the world in Jesus.

Depopulation and growth

Patterns of population distribution are changing across Australia. This is not new, and has occurred in many ways throughout history. However, we are experiencing particular shifts in the size and characteristics of many communities within the Diocese. Some towns which were thriving agricultural and service hubs no longer have the industry to support the populations they once housed. Dairying, pastoral and cropping land is now worked with less people meaning that there are fewer living on the land. This has a natural consequence for the schools, shops and businesses which supported the larger populations. Yet this is not the only story in our diocese. There are places within the Diocese where the population is growing, new houses being built, and the industries that serve and sustain them are developing.

As we seek to be faithful to our call to be God's church in this part of the world, and as I dream of a diocese where there is a worshipping congregation in every community we will have to be responsive to new patterns of meeting and engagement. This is not a new challenge to be faced by the church. It is not even new for the Australian church. However, it is new for our lifetime. As we meet the challenge of nurturing existing congregations and finding new patterns of gathering and growing we will need to mine the storehouse of Christian practice in the past for our tips for the future. What is at first glance an innovation has probably been used and useful before!





Property

The changing demographic factors leave us with the practical challenge of managing numerous buildings, or buildings that struggle to meet modern demands. Throughout its history the Diocese has received and disposed of land, built and sold buildings. There are over 200 ex-churches in our diocese alone! It made sense for small chapel sized buildings to be established when there were populations restricted to walking or riding in a cart. It also made sense for local communities to hold their own building when they also shopped, banked and were educated in one place. With the advent of fast cars and patterns of travel that take us far beyond the places in which we live the requirements for our buildings have changed.

As we seek to be faithful to our call to be God's church in this part of the world, and as I dream of a diocese where there is a worshipping congregation in every community we will have to consider when owning a building helps or hinders our worship and witness. We will need to continue to ask ourselves how close is too close for churches to sit, where will we need places to worship for the future, and how many people are gathering at any one time. While buildings can be the repositories for the faith-full imagination of communities they are not the only places within which we may worship God. Many have enjoyed the warmth and hospitality of a home group, or the spontaneity and openness of an outdoor chapel. I would love to see a chain of Anglican 'house churches' connecting the small communities of the Mallee unencumbered by property maintenance or insurance. I wonder what other creative places can be found?

Increased costs

Insurance and maintenance costs have risen as the reality of living within a modern environment affects the church. Being the stewards of material assets passed down by our forebears has always involved the moral responsibility to care for them appropriately. In our contemporary environment this means attending to appropriate building upkeep and insurance measures. Put simply maintaining buildings as they age is expensive. Underinsuring or missing maintenance only defers the cost and places the responsibility on the next generation. We need to be aware that attempting to reduce expenses associated with buildings by insuring them for less than they will cost to repair is not an option. Our insurers will only pay out a fraction of the insured value and historical regulators can force us to make up shortfalls in the cost to restore a building to its previous state.

As we seek to be faithful to our call to be God's church in this part of the world, and as I dream of a diocese where there is a worshipping congregation in every community we will find freedom in not being chained to the necessary costs that arise from owning unnecessary assets. Rising costs can be a

great stress, however they do force us to ask whether the things we own are ‘bread for the journey or lead in the saddlebags’. It may be that the reasons for keeping certain assets are good and right and help us to sustain worship and witness in a community. It may also be that they weigh us down and hinder our journey as disciples of Jesus.

Increased regulation – safe ministry, safe spaces and financial transparency

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has rightly identified the presence of abuse within the church, and a culture of secrecy and denial which allowed abuse to be perpetuated. While it has been painful to read and hear of the great wrong done in our name, that it has been brought to light provides us with the opportunity to change our ways and attempt to make wrong responses right.

Providing for safe ministry is not the only way in which people should expect to be assured of our practice. The physical environments we work in, the financial reporting and decision-making cultures we accept are also being scrutinised with an unaccustomed level of detail. To my mind this reflects people’s need to be reassured that churches are trustworthy places. This is driven partly by the reality that many people only know ‘church’ from what they hear or see from the outside. It is also due partly to the way that we have failed to act rightly and have hurt people in the process.

As we seek to be faithful to our call to be God’s church in this part of the world, and as I dream of a diocese where there is a worshipping congregation in every community we will find opportunity to regain the trust of those who have been hurt by bad practice. As we navigate the willingness of government and other entities to scrutinise and regulate the way we organise and manage our corporate life we need to do so with a mindset that desires safety for all people. This reflects Jesus’ own instruction that we should, ‘Love our neighbors as ourselves.’ Even as attending to new or difficult levels of regulation we have an opportunity to humbly re-present the church as a trustworthy place to a watching world.

Changed engagement with church and faith

We are now living in an Australian community in which people have a cursory, let alone working or accurate, understanding of the Christian faith. Many younger people (those who are starting their own families now) have never been in the habit of attending church. Yet a large majority of Australians retain a spiritual sensibility or awareness of ‘god’. Like other challenges we face this is not new, but it stands in contrast to the surge in church attendance following WWII. We can say that we have inherited a system designed to accommodate and relate to a powerful majority of Australians but are now engaging with a majority who are estranged from the church and Christian beliefs. For many Australians their conscious engagement with the church will be through what they see, hear or read in the media. As we know this is often unflattering and even untrue. Yet many react with surprise as they get to know lively and thoughtful faith as it is held by real people: you and me!

As we seek to be faithful to our call to be God’s church in this part of the world, and as I dream of a diocese where there is a worshipping congregation in every community we will find joy in bearing witness to our faith knowing that it is God who is responsible for changing hearts. As estrangement from the church is the significant issue, wooing people back to engagement with God will take time. Truly, it is as people see the sufficiency and beauty in our lives of faith in Jesus they will be won over. Our task is to be winsome rather than combative, confident rather than strident, and satisfied in God rather than always on the take.

Redress and recognition: amending the past

We are now aware of ways that actions done in our name have impacted people in the past. These actions may be likened to the accumulation of debt to those who have been hurt. This is particularly

acute when we think of those who seek redress following abuse, and our First Peoples whose land was taken and assigned to others. We have the challenge to provide redress and recognition. This is a challenge on two fronts. The initial challenge is to see that 'giving up' some of the material wealth we have is necessary. To give up what we have inherited challenges our sense of being provided for and makes us consider some of the plans we have to provide ministry and care for property. The second challenge is to be doing so while under financial stress. Increased property and ministry related costs, and static giving patterns within parishes make giving up income to pay other debts doubly hard.

As we seek to be faithful to our call to be God's church in this part of the world, and as I dream of a diocese where there is a worshipping congregation in every community we will find surprising blessings as we own up to the wrongs of the past and rely on God's provision for the future. I find it difficult to contemplate a church which knows of wrong that has been done in its name, knows what may be done to pay down the moral debt it owes and does not do it. I fear that we will lock ourselves out of God's surprising provision if we try and hoard treasure that needs to be repaid.

Keeping the main thing the main thing

Remaining focused on the heart of our mission is challenging when there are many things to address or even contend with. So, the final challenge I foresee is that of remembering our core business. We are here to worship God and bear witness to what he has, is and will do through Jesus. We must be continually reminding each other of this goal, even as we deliberately, systematically and patiently address the other challenges that arise.



However, the good news is that we have many things going for us to help keep us on track:

1. We have a good God who wants to be known – what a joy it is to be able to know the 'High King of Heaven' not at a distance, not superficially, not vaguely, but their very heart, as a person.
2. We have Jesus who makes life beautiful – in a world crying out for a beautiful way to live we have Jesus who came 'not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many'. In following Jesus we know how life can be beautiful, and are made able to share in God's gift of life.
3. We have sisters and brothers each with the Spirit of God – we are placed in a family empowered by God to care for each other, work together, serve each other and mutually bear witness to the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.
4. We live amongst people who are more ready to respond than we think – our world is full of pain, and even the comfort it offers does not satisfy. As we patiently and winsomely show and tell the power of God, the goodness of Jesus, and the enabling presence of the Spirit we will find that people respond.

From vision to action

I have been greatly blessed during my first year with you. It has been a privilege to visit you, share in worship and acts of witness with you, teach, encourage and even work through some difficult things with you.

While many of the opportunities and challenges we face here in the Diocese of Bendigo are shared across Australia (and even the world) we do have unique characteristics and capacities. In seeking to describe my dream for the Diocese and the context within which we live and minister I am inviting you into what I believe are the activities we need to promote to be responsive to God's lead.



My plan for the next four years (2019-2022) does not replace our Strategic Plan. Rather it seeks to give you clarity and confidence in my activity as we address the challenges while being receptive to the gifts that God has given us. While many things may change this timeframe gives us enough time to see fruit from labour as I approach the middle of my term as your bishop. It is based upon six foundational activities which I will be undertaking:

1. Promoting local ministry
2. Making congregations and parishes work
3. Growing great ministers
4. Developing diocesan capacity
5. Paying past and present debts
6. Living in worship and witness

Promoting local ministry

All Christians are called by God to be engaged in the work of God. Baptism into Christ carries with it the call to share in the ministry of the church. This call to serve is inescapably local as we are embodied people set in particular places to exercise an incarnational ministry. As we seek to transform our society through the gospel of Jesus Christ we must be paying attention to the actual, local, communities of the Diocese. Accordingly, we will need to raise up and empower locally embedded Christians to take the lead in worship and witness where they live. By attending to those whom God has specifically called to lead in certain places we will be faithful in following God's Spirit who is already at work.

Locally enabled leadership may be ordained (i.e. as a deacon or priest), however it may also be lay. This will need to be responsive to the people God has placed in situ, their calling and gifts. It will also need to be alert to the needs and growth of the communities being served. The key aspect of successful locally enabled leadership is effective nurture, encouragement and support from centres close enough to allow for practical collaboration. This is where we can make the connection between congregation (a relational unit) and parish (a unit of oversight and administration) work for us.

We are blessed to have parishes with the capacity to support a diverse range of activities and the appointment of clergy leadership able to be set aside for the specific work of ministry. We are also blessed that they are in proximity to parishes and centres who have faithful Christians able to worship and witness but are in need of help. Ancient patterns of congregational life, such as the 'Minster Model', in which a central 'Minster' (what we would call a multi staff church) supported the life of a range of congregations set in distant communities, provide a way for us to reach back into places which have found it difficult to sustain life as an autonomous parish.

- 1. As I work with the SLT I will be prioritising the appointment to fully stipended positions of clergy able to gather, mentor, encourage and support their peers.**
- 2. This will enable me to be creative in appointing locally embedded clergy and lay leaders (OLMs, OPMs and Licensed Lay Ministers) as focal pastors in communities and parishes unable to support full-time clergy.**

Making congregations and parishes work

I have been most encouraged when I have visited the congregations of the Diocese. This is because you are at your best when you are worshipping God and bearing witness to Jesus. Even (perhaps especially) our smallest congregations show out that God is good and powerful, but his power is the sort that sustains life rather than kills. For this reason, I will be most interested when you speak to me of the life and health of your congregational existence. This is not because I do not like church buildings or the planning and administration that goes into coordinating parish life (not surprisingly I do), rather our parishes are the means by which we sustain local worship and witness not the worship and witness themselves.

Bishop Andrew led the Diocese well in developing a system to exercise central oversight of administrative processes that is responsible and responsive to local needs. The corporate structure of the Diocese gives assurance to the parishes that matters are attended to safely, transparently and legally. Yet the processes require participation, and often initiation, locally. By maintaining this practice we will be able to address the demands that flow from increased cost and regulation.

It is my intention that the things we must do locally, worshipping and being a witness in our words and actions, are supported by smooth, coordinated and collaborative action across the whole diocese. In doing so we will be able to consolidate ministry throughout rather than retreating to the few places that happen to be able to bear the load independently.

- 3. As I work with the Registrar, Registry team and the committees of the Diocese I will be pursuing an administrative system that allows for common approaches to shared activity.**
- 4. As I work with each Parish I will be asking how the work assumed by the Parish Council enables the worship and witness of your congregations.**

Growing great ministers

Servanthood is the mark of a great minister; whether they be lay or ordained. Being an effective and faithful servant requires continual growth and encouragement. The health of our congregations and diocesan activities is related directly to the capacity of those God has gifted to lead us (remember that God has chosen to involve us in his work!). As we seek to worship and witness I want to see our clergy and lay leaders grow in their skills and capacity so that they are well equipped to teach, train, lead and care for you. Being a servant-leader is exciting and fulfilling, but it is also hard and draining. Our leaders need to be cared for and encouraged themselves. This is so that their hearts may be right: filled with a passion for God and love for you.

As a diocese we have invested in the supportive networks that are necessary to see well trained and well supported leaders thrive. It is not enough that I ordain or authorise ministers, I must also

ensure that there are ways for clergy and lay leaders to grow in their capacity. Our training, supervision and mentoring structures based around the Education and Development Unit (EDU) belie our size and regional status. This is a feature that we must maintain if we are to be serious about raising up local leaders and deploying clergy who take the lead for the future.

- 5. As I work with the EDU to enable local training pathways I will be looking to establish a regular flow of training placements and hubs to feed the leadership of the future.**
- 6. As I ordain and license clergy and lay leaders I will be requiring that supervision and mentoring is part of their routine.**
- 7. As I work with Synod I will be advocating for the provision of resource to allow for training and development throughout a leader's lifespan.**

Developing diocesan capacity

We would fail to be faithful stewards of God's gifts to us if we did not pay attention to the assets we have been given. Certain plots of land and buildings have the capacity to be fruitfully developed to generate a return that will help to enable the diocesan vision. This will require careful attention and a prudent approach to risk but has the capacity to create alternative income streams to assist in managing the increased costs associated with today's church.

The established approvals processes for the maintenance and sale of church land works well for usual activities and simple disposal of asset. In places where partnerships with outside partners may be negotiated to allow for significant development the strength and oversight of the whole diocese is needed. The income generated from such development would then be available to be used in the maintenance and development of ministry within the parish involved and allow for the smoothing of costs incurred as part of the modern environment.

- 8. I will be seeking to progress projects with some parishes that establish an alternative income stream to be used to manage strategic and structural costs.**
- 9. I will be working with the Diocesan Executive to establish an Enterprise Governance Group to identify, negotiate and govern the development of strategic projects that fall outside of the usual maintenance and use of church land.**

Paying past and present debts

As a diocese we have worked hard to change the way that we operate so that our culture is safe and open. We have robust and independent complaints and disciplinary processes. However, we need to be willing to take a long-term view on meeting the right claims of those who have been hurt by past failings. The financial impact of paying redress will be an increasing reality. As is meaningful engagement with the traditional owners of our land. I have already written about the need for us to act justly, and we need to be prepared to meet these debts. In preparing to do so, and then following through we are showing that we are true disciples of the God who abhors evil and are willing to trust in his future provision.

The costs associated with redress and the recognition of the traditional owners of the land are those that belong to us all. Yet the Diocese is the only entity within our family which can manage claims. So these are debts that will be managed through the Diocese on behalf of the parishes. We have the capacity to pay due claims immediately effectively borrowing against the Common Fund within the Bendigo Diocesan Trusts Corporation. This means that the effect of redress and recognition may be smoothed as the trust is recharged over the course of years. These are debts we must pay but can approach as part of a long-term strategy rather than an ad hoc deluge.



Living in worship and witness

As we seek to ‘keep the main thing the main thing’ I want to conclude with a specific invitation to you. The plan enumerated above is largely about clearing the way for worship and witness. This invitation addresses worship and witness directly.

There are three imperatives we must account for if our worship is to be an effective witness to God’s great works. They are to be:

- **Authentic** – we must be ‘of the author’ of our faith. As I have written earlier this begins as we keep in step with the Spirit, but it grows as we pay attention to God’s word. That is God incarnate Word, Jesus, and God’s word in scripture. We will be authentic in our faith as we pursue God for God’s self, not as a figment of our imagination.
- **Proximate** – God has called us to ‘go into the world’. This means that we need to be close enough to those who do not know Jesus for them to notice! Too often our lives as authentic disciples of Jesus are sealed off from our families, neighbors, and friends. As people living in a world estranged from the church we need to dream up ways of moving close to others rather than waiting for them to come near to us.
- **Intelligible** – just as God accommodates himself to us (most significantly by becoming like us in Jesus) so we need to work hard to present a gospel that is clear. Part of this occurs as we listen closely to the concerns and desires of those around us. Part occurs as we seek to tell out how Jesus meets their need or confronts their error. And part arises as we live lives that ‘make sense’. In other words when what we do is in alignment with what we say. We are to be a hypocrite free zone.

My invitation to you for these next four years works to address our authenticity, proximity and intelligibility. Each year I will invite you to take one step with me to work on the next part of our witness. They are just small steps, but small steps are achievable steps when they rely on upon the Spirit’s enabling and the Spirit’s growth if they are to bear fruit.

Invitation to action	All of us	Clergy	Bishop
13. Authenticity 2019	Be part of the Diocesan Prayer Adventure – pray that God will do something in the lives of 3 people you know	Lead a small prayer or bible study group	Lead <i>The Bible Overview</i> (1 day trip through the bible) in each rural deanery
Proximity 2020	Priorities: Working to serve our local communities through community chaplaincy and establishing ministries to youth, children and families		
Intelligibility 2021	Priorities: Learning how to tell our stories, gearing up for intelligible services @ Christmas, Easter and 2 other times.		
2022	Let’s see where the Spirit leads!		

Are you worried Bishop?

I have a list of people to meet when I get to heaven.

A pastor named Lesslie Newbigin is in the top three. As a young man Lesslie Newbigin went from England to India as a missionary. Sometime later (and against his wishes) the Church of South India made him a bishop. When luminaries would visit him in India they would enquire seriously, 'Are you worried Bishop, is there a future for the church in India?' Bishop Lesslie is reputed to say, 'Don't be ridiculous, of course there is! Jesus has promised that the gates of hell will not prevail against his people.'

Friends, although we do face challenges the God we worship remains the same. This means that we too can walk into the future confidently because we share the same promise. God has called the church into being, God has gifted the church to bear witness, and we have inherited every heavenly blessing because of Jesus. What a picture to be assembling!



Bishop's Priorities 2019-2022

1. As I work with the SLT I will be prioritising the appointment to fully stipended positions of clergy able to gather, mentor, encourage and support their peers.
2. This will enable me to be creative in appointing locally embedded clergy and lay leaders (OLMs and Licensed Lay Ministers) as focal pastors in communities and parishes unable to support full-time clergy.
3. As I work with the Registrar, Registry team and the committees of the Diocese I will be pursuing an administrative system that allows for common approaches to shared activity.
4. As I work with each Parish I will be asking how the work assumed by the Parish Council enables the worship and witness of your congregations.
5. As I work with the EDU to enable local training pathways I will be looking to establish a regular flow of training placements and hubs to feed the leadership of the future.
6. As I ordain and license clergy and lay leaders I will be requiring that supervision and mentoring is part of their routine.
7. As I work with Synod I will be advocating for the provision of resource to allow for training and development throughout a leader's lifespan.
8. I will be seeking to progress projects with some parishes that establish an alternative income stream to be used to manage strategic and structural costs.
9. I will be working with the Diocesan Executive to establish an Enterprise Governance Group to identify, negotiate and govern the development of strategic projects that fall outside of the usual maintenance and use of church land.
10. I will be active in working with the National Redress Scheme and Kooyoora Ltd. to make opportunities for those who have been abused within the Diocese to access redress.
11. I will take opportunities to engage with traditional owner groups to establish fair, respectful and fruitful relationships.
12. As I work with the Finance Committee, Executive and Trustees we will be active to smooth the effect of just settlements on parishes.
13. Authenticity – My invitation for 2019:
 - a. Everyone: Be part of the *Diocesan Prayer Adventure*
 - b. Clergy: Lead a small prayer or bible study group
 - c. Bishop: Lead *The Bible Overview* (1 day trip through the bible) in each rural deanery

