

LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

The Church of Maitland-Newcastle is centred on Christ, the Cornerstone, and seeks always to live as a community of people with Leadership and Structure

In the pages that follow we explore the fifth 'Foundation' of our life and mission as the church of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

Our Story takes us to the Acts of the Apostles and reminds us of the kind of leadership the early church experienced.

Foundational Statements highlight the foundational principles upon which Christian leadership is based.

Concerns summarise the leadership and structure issues raised by diocesan respondents to the Plenary Council Listening and Dialogue Session as well as those who submitted written responses at the first session of our Diocesan Synod in November 2019.

Recommendations suggest what could be done to address the issues raised in the preceding section

*Jesus called them together and said,
“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them,
and their high officials exercise authority over them.
Not so with you.
Instead, whoever wants to become great among you
must be your servant,
and whoever wants to be first
must be your slave
just as the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Matthew 20:25-28

OUR STORY

Peter is to the fore on the day of Pentecost. The other apostles were 'with him' as he proclaimed the Good News boldly and taught with authority in Jesus' name, calling the crowd to repentance.

Peter had earlier taken the lead to ensure the integrity of 'the Twelve' in God's new structure. He initiated the prayer and the process for electing Matthias to replace Judas as witness to Jesus.

'The Twelve' saw to the commissioning of 'the Seven' to meet a need identified by members of the community, the neglect of certain widows. They called a full meeting of 'the disciples' and put their proposal which 'the whole assembly' approved and enacted to benefit the growing organism.

Peter, the Rock, and the other apostles are affirmed in their leadership and authority in the first community. All disciples, the whole assembly of the infant church, is actively involved in church life and closely united with their leaders in prayer, discernment, decision making and practice.

Paul established structured communities in the localities he evangelised. Women leaders, Lydia and Priscilla, feature in this story. Legitimate teaching authority was a prime concern for the late-comer 'Apostle'. He appointed leaders to pass on what he had passed to them, the teaching he had received.

Paul himself deferred to the authority of the founding church community. He travelled to Jerusalem to submit an account of his teaching and practice concerning admission of pagans to the church. He was welcomed by the Jerusalem community and gave an account of what God had done through him. Some strongly opposed him. The outcome Paul sought was supported by Peter, ruled on by James, concurred with by 'the whole church' and 'decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves'.

Peter had earlier given the apostles and 'the brothers' an account of his boldness in baptising Roman pagans. His 'point by point' details of the Holy Spirit's intervention convinced the community of the rightness of his course of action. They could only defer to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Leaders at the service of mission and community featured prominently in the early church. Equally characteristic was prayerful communal discernment resulting in consensus decisions on major issues which determined the future direction of the church.

The people of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle are successors and inheritors of the first Christians. We have heard the Good News of the Father's love for us and have taken it to heart. We have united with Jesus and all who are one with him through Baptism. We live out our faith in communal and personal prayer, and through communal and personal service to one another and our society.

We have a variety of ministries and roles, and a variety of talents and charisms, all contributing to the building up of our unity in faith and love as members of Christ's Body.

As Christ's community we are hierarchical in a hierarchy of service. As Christ's community we are not dominated, but served by those appointed by Christ to ministry. We are not dictated to, but are led to discern together the way of Christ into the future.

Our Bishop has surrounded himself with consultative forums, such as the Council for Mission, which enable him and us to identify and address issues concerning the life and mission of our local church. All of us together, immersed in the life of God through baptism into our church community, are inspired and endowed to share in the mission to all humanity which Jesus received from his Father.

FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

We seek to discover the signs of God's presence and purpose in our world. This includes being open to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church through the hearts and minds of God's people.

Our world needs to be healed not only of the present virus, but also of the social ills of inequality, injustice and exclusion that afflict so many of our brothers and sisters in the human family. (Pope Francis 30 September 2020).

I am conscious of the effort and work being carried out in various parts of the world to come up with the necessary means to ensure the safety and protection of the integrity of children and of vulnerable adults...Together with those efforts, every one of the baptised should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need. This change calls for a personal and communal conversion that makes us see things as the Lord does (Pope Francis, Letter to the People of God Aug 2018).

Clericalism flourishes in contexts where the lay faithful are excluded or marginalised and adopt a posture of subservience. (*The Light from the Southern Cross* p 65).

We see leadership as a ministry of service, emulating the servant leadership of Christ.

The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them ... It must not be so among you for whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be your slave even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve... (Mt 20:25-28).

Since the primary responsibility of all governing bodies in the Church is to nourish and serve the mission of the whole community, those who exercise authority in the Church must always be open to a deeper conversion to the grace of the Holy Spirit. (*Light from the Southern Cross* p 31).

The shepherd has the ability to go in front of the flock to show the way, stay in the middle of the flock to see what happens within, and also be at the rear of the flock to make sure that no one is left behind. (Pope Francis September 2019).

Do I love my people in order to serve them better? Am I humble and do I listen to everybody, to diverse opinions in order to choose the best path? If you don't ask those questions, your governance will not be good. (Pope Francis We Need You in Washington, D.C. 26 September 2013).

We welcome Pope Francis' insistent call for a synodal church that involves the whole People of God in its life and mission.

In the light of Christ's teaching, we have seen the importance of solidarity, subsidiarity and respect for human dignity for the shaping of a society in accord with the values of God's Kingdom, a society that gives priority to its poorest and most vulnerable members, and to the responsible stewardship of the goods of creation. (Pope Francis 30 September 2020).

...we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church. Because the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society, the presence of women must also be guaranteed in the workplace and in the various other settings where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures. (Pope Francis *The Joy of the Gospel* 103).

We embrace the principle of subsidiarity: involvement and decision making belong as close as possible to those the decision affects.

The Synod process begins by listening to the people of God...according to a principle dear to the Church of the first millennium: What touches all should be considered and approved by all. (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium Light to the Nations* 12).

To emerge better from a crisis, the principle of subsidiarity must be enacted, respecting the autonomy and the capacity to take initiative that everyone has, especially the least....this principle allows everyone to assume his or her own role for the healing and destiny of society.... (Pope Francis General Audience 23 September 2020).

We seek to arrive at decisions which all can accept gracefully and support wholeheartedly (even if some wish the decision had been different) because they know the group honestly searched together for the Spirit of God in and for the life of the community.

Discernment of the Spirit...listens to others so as to learn, is sensitive to all approaches, encourages collaboration rather than competition and aims not at majority vote but consensus. It recognises that each participant has a part of the truth and a share of the wisdom by reason of each one's unique experience of God in life, union with Christ and gifts of the Spirit. (Archbishop F Carroll, Canberra-Goulburn Synod, 1989).

How can we know if something comes from the Holy Spirit...? The only way is through discernment, which calls for something more than intelligence or common sense. When we seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel, then surely, we will grow in this spiritual endowment. (Pope Francis *Rejoice and Be Glad* 166).

We accept individual and communal responsibility for our decisions and actions, our personal gifts and the gifts of creation.

Stewardship is integral to the mission of the Church; it is a fundamental tenet of the Church's spirituality. Stewardship does not suggest 'ownership' but a responsibility for service that aims to nurture a gift from another, from the God who initiates the relationship of friendship with humanity. (*The Light from the Southern Cross* p 2).

Contemporary standards of good governance require that the Church's structures and practices of governance are more accountable, more transparent, more meaningfully consultative and more participatory, including at the diocesan and parish level. (*The Light from the Southern Cross* p 50).

CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Change/Transformation of Culture

What we heard:

- *Need for leaders at all levels who are:*
 - *willing to discern the will of the Holy Spirit and courageous enough to be open to change that allows the church to be truly the sign and instrument of God's mission in and to our world*
 - *open in heart and mind to new possibilities and ways of thinking in undertaking God's work*
 - *truly willing to read the signs of the times*
 - *open to conversion, renewal and reform for self and for the community*
 - *prepared to speak courageously like prophets; to break the walls of the museum; to go back onto our pilgrim journey*
- *Need for Institutional change in governance - new model of Church, diocese, parish*

What we recommend:

LS 1.1 That the Synod direct a fundamental, comprehensive external review of leadership and governance practice, culture and training within the diocese against the criteria of concerns stated in 'What we heard'.

LS 1.2 That the outcomes of this review be used to inform leadership training, cultural change and spiritual reform within the diocese.

2. Servant Leadership

What we heard:

- *Need to re-image a 'governance' that directs attention to the person of Jesus the Christ, rather than to the structures of administration and power; that is pastoral first and foremost, more than a business corporation*
- *For the importance of good leadership and governance with accountability, inclusion in decision-making and appointments, equality and transparency, with synodality and subsidiarity, and with ongoing and open dialogue with all Christ's faithful*
- *To look afresh honestly and openly at questions of governance and leadership, and challenge structures which restrict/limit/block mercy, humility and healing*
- *To be inclusive and sensitive to needs of women – gender equality in all leadership roles*
- *For leadership which is crucial to communicating to parishes the notion of inclusive, participative and synodal movement*

What we recommend:

LS 2.1 That the Synod affirm a commitment to leadership and governance reform within the diocese that is non-clericalist, synodal, inclusive, transparent and servant-leader in its style and one that affirms a deep connection between humanity and divinity, between the material and the spiritual, between the secular and the sacred, between the transcendence and the immanence of God.

3. Ordained Leadership

What we heard:

- *Need to re-examine ordained ministry and lay ministry - acknowledge the failures of a false sense of superiority, that 'we' know it. Priests/bishops should be evaluated*
- *To explore the nexus between ordination (open to a tiny percentage of the people of God) and leadership based on the gospel; needs to be abandoned – It's not working!*
- *To address Clericalism/ Institutionalism and its impact on decision making; replace clericalism with the involvement of all the baptised*
- *For priests to be more spiritual, more open to their parish community, going out to the locals as a group to speak and invite people to join us*

What we recommend:

LS 3.1 That the Synod direct the establishment of leadership training for existing clergy and for future diocesan leaders (lay and clerical) that focuses on the development of a leadership style and culture consistent with Recommendation 2.1 and Informed by the review recommendation 1.2

4. Leadership and Management Structures

What we heard:

- *Need to explore the possibility of a new leadership and governance model*
- *For transparency, accountability, responsibility, compliance in all church agencies*
- *For decision-making by discernment (DPP Principle 3.8)*
- *To address systemic issues in order to form better relationships - especially where the system creates division e.g. schools and parishes*
- *To adopt principles and practices of models of successful businesses, but the Church is called primarily to mission, to proclaim Christ the Good News of God's love for all*
- *To examine the "business" presence of the Diocese in CatholicCare, pre-schools, schools and aged-care. We seem to be Government-funded generic 'helpers'. Is this our mission?*
- *To address the need for the just remuneration of lay ministers/ as recommended in past Assemblies*
- *For greater involvement of women as essential at every level of governance and leadership so as to address gender inequity and to recognize women as being leaders in the church*
- *For shared leadership - how best to involve committed lay women and men in contributing their gifts to church governance*
- *To examine and develop all forms of diocesan communication. Don't assume the website is enough when even computer literate people rarely access it*

What we recommend:

LS 4.1 That, based on the outcomes of the leadership and governance review referred to in Recommendation 1.1, appropriate reform and re-education programmes be developed to achieve the leadership and governance commitment affirmed in Recommendation 2.1 and in 'What we heard' on this issue.

LS 4.2 That the achievement of the desired leadership and governance culture be externally audited and reported on a bi-annual basis until there is clear evidence that the new culture has been broadly established, has taken root and is self-propagating.

LS 4.3 That the terms of reference for such audits be determined by the Diocesan Council for Mission.

LS 4.4 That all diocesan management structures be reviewed and reformed with the intention to create the greatest level of subsidiarity, flattening of management structures and de-corporatisation of their management practices, including the establishment of discernment and consensus-based decision making practices to the greatest practical extent.

5. Diocese/Parish Relationships

What we heard:

- *Improve relationships and communications between the Diocese, parishes and congregations – be more open and transparent*
- *Address lack of connection between diocese and parishes e.g. no connection between Council for Mission and parish/parish councils*
- *Consultation rather than the imposition of ideas/decisions*

What we recommend:

LS 5.1 That the Synod affirm the use of the leadership and governance review proposed at Recommendation 1.1, to fully understand and develop the relationship between the Diocese and the Parishes.

LS 5.2 The Synod affirms that the application of Recommendations 1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4 at parish and diocesan level will be critical to address these issues.

6. Local Parish Leadership

What we heard:

- *Need for careful selection of priests and others for parish leadership*
- *For parishes to be converted from maintenance to mission*
- *To identify “high performing” parishes and priests – share best practice*
- *To measure “engagement” levels of parishioners*
- *For Pastoral Planning: Set goals and objectives for each parish/priest, publish and share these and then measure performance*
- *To support overseas priests - problem of cultural differences, understanding accents, etc.*
- *For more local decision-making. Subsidiarity – local actioning in practice. Don’t restrict people from using their gifts*
- *To restructure the clergy’s part in parish decision-making. Parish priests should not be able to override the will of the people*
- *For the clergy to trust lay people, recognise the education of lay people today and their call to do more than administrative tasks*
- *For healthy joyful service within a parish community. People need the assurance that there is a structure that will encourage and support them, and have an exit plan!*
- *To explore the possibility that a parish be lay-led or under a lay administrator*
- *For a review of our church buildings to ensure that they are accessible to all*

What we recommend:

LS 6.1 That communication be inclusive, participatory and synodal and based upon the 'principles of good governance'.

LS 6.2 That local decision making be encouraged based on the principles of subsidiarity and discernment and consensus-based decision making.

7. Sexual Abuse and The Royal Commission

What we heard:

- *As a diocesan community we need to develop humility and own our brokenness and incompleteness by addressing our history of sexual abuse. We need to acknowledge what the church has failed to achieve in order to move forward*
- *To acknowledge what our diocese has done to address sexual abuse and support victims - Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults*
- *To regain trust and to help people heal after the sexual abuse crisis. More transparency and accountability needed. To acknowledge the loss of credibility and trust within the community*
- *For greater concern for victims and survivors - Need for institutional church change - expressing genuine as opposed to legalistic apology for all the abuse and lack of compassion*
- *To repent for clergy sexual abuse; healing liturgies and public signs or acts of reparation; ongoing and frequent liturgies of apology, forgiveness and mercy; open acknowledgment by priests at Mass, of sexual abuse*
- *For better implementation of Royal Commission recommendations*
- *For healing and moving beyond the clergy sexual abuse scandal; need to let go of what has been in the light of the institutional church's betrayal of the People of God (of Royal Commission) and find new models based firmly on the gospel*
- *For more study on causes and implications of child sexual abuse*
- *Not to treat all people or priests as paedophiles*
- *To care for paedophile priests*

What we recommend:

LS 7.1 A reform of the Diocese that focuses on:

- 7.1.1 structures that are based upon a foundation of service to the people of God humbly acknowledging the great damage done by sexual abuse and cover-up and seeking to regain the trust that has been lost.**
- 7.1.2 structures that achieve genuine cultural reform and do not just replace clerical leadership structures of the past with new hierarchical 'business' structures. These new structures to be based upon the same values outlined in Recommendation 2.1 and informed by the outcomes of Recommendation 1.2.**
- 7.1.3 a healthy and more meaningful view of sexuality, intimacy, friendship, relationships, the body, and conscience.**

8. Bringing the Church into the 21st Century

What we heard:

- *We need more positive Church public relations*
- *To modernise Church teachings - allowing contraception and IVF; supporting same-sex marriage; supporting abortion and euthanasia; ordination of women*

- *For radical change, a new order, inverted pyramid*
- *To check for understanding -“Catholic jargon”. Change church rules to reflect acceptance of all can be a barrier to knowing/belonging for youth, English as second language, and converts*
- *Not to change without good reason - the saving of souls was never mentioned*

What we recommend:

LS 8.1 Engage in open dialogue regarding the positive points and challenges of our modern secular age.

LS 8.2 Deal with difficult and contemporary issues from a Christ centred empathic perspective and be open to acceptance of plurality of views and find new ways to educate and explain its teaching on contemporary moral issues.

9. Plenary Council Process

What we heard:

- *Scepticism about the Plenary Council process*
- *Exclusion of lay people and women from the decision-making roles of the Plenary Council*
- *That the Plenary Council was not necessary vs more frequent Plenary Councils in Australia!*
- *The need to listen to the spirit of the law, and be freed from the letter of the law*
- *That a national platform would allow people to connect with others of interest – projects, missionary services*
- *The need for a national program of servant leadership for our emerging lay leaders*

What we recommend

LS 9.1 *The diocese uses the Synod process to demonstrate the sincerity of intention for the radical cultural and spiritual change in the church through an exemplary new leadership culture, consultation and inclusive processes, that will also address what is seen as dualistic thinking and the implications of the distinction between kataphatic and apophatic faith¹.*

¹ “Kataphatic” prayer has content; it uses words, images, symbols, ideas. “Apophatic” prayer has no content. It means emptying the mind of words and ideas and simply resting in the presence of God. Centering prayer is apophatic. Ignatian prayer is mostly kataphatic. (IgnatianSpirituality.com)