

Advent 2022

### **PASTORAL LETTER TO THE DIOCESE: NEW HOPE IN THE MURRAY**

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The season of Advent is almost complete, Christmas is almost upon us, and of course the New Year. I thought that I would take this opportunity to write to you to wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year, to thank you for all your efforts in the Diocese in this past year, and to give you a glimpse into what is happening in the Diocese going forward.

#### **New Hope**

Advent and Christmas are seasons of hope. Advent gives us the promise of the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, to judge the living and the dead. Christmas is the reminder that the hope we have in the coming of Jesus is surely founded because of the first coming of Jesus at Christmas.

Within the Diocese we also have green shoots of new hope. As I go around the Diocese, I see these green shoots everywhere. I never cease to be amazed by the amazing faithfulness of the people of this Diocese in all the parishes that I visit. I want to say thank you to everyone in the Diocese for the amazing work you have done this year and in the past to ensure that the mission and ministry of the Diocese has a great chance of success in the future. I am constantly encouraged by your faithfulness despite all the challenges we have faced over the past few decades in the Diocese.

#### **New Hope in new people**

Part of this new hope is reflected in some of the events taking place and that have taken place recently. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of December I inducted Fr. David Patterson as the Priest in Charge of the Riverland. There is great excitement in the Riverland about this appointment and I am delighted to make such an appointment. Recently I had occasion to ordain Fr. Peter Chapman to the Priesthood, and Alison Dutton and Dr. Rodney Fopp to the Diaconate. These last three ordinations took place after a very successful Selection Conference held in Victor Harbor led by the new Director of Formation Dr. Rodney Fopp. Earlier this year I had the delightful opportunity to commission Fr. David McDougall to the parish of Balhannah and Woodside in the Hills. Fr. David brings new ideas and perspectives on mission and ministry. On the Registrar front we have recently welcomed Mr. Richard Earley as our new Registrar. Richard has wide experience in different Anglican organizations, and we are



delighted to welcome him to the Diocese. In the new year he will be getting around to the different parishes to introduce himself, and to get a feel for us and our ways. I encourage you to welcome him and ask him questions. You will find him approachable and highly engaged.

### **New Hope in new strategies for Leadership**

I am especially pleased with Dr. Fopp agreeing to be the new Director of Formation. He is an experienced educator in the church. He holds two Doctorates, one in Political Science, and the other in Theology, specifically in the Resurrection Theology of four significant 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theologians. Dr. Fopp has for the past 12 years lectured at St. Barnabas Theological College and has participated in turning around parishes as their pastor in the Uniting Church. Dr. Fopp has been an active Anglican at St. Peter's Cathedral for the past five years.

Next year Dr. Fopp, in consultation with me, and Diocesan Council, will be examining strategies for allowing us to develop a leadership pipeline within the Diocese. We need this to identify, raise up, train and deploy leaders within our Diocese. During this process we will identify the future lay and ordained leadership of our Diocese to assist us in growing this Diocese into the future.

I cannot stress highly enough how important it is that we develop our lay leadership. It is vitally important to the future of our Diocese that we encourage and develop lay leadership. Only with a strong lay leadership collaborating with the clergy will we have a strong Diocese. Only from strong lay leadership will we identify the strong ordained leadership we need for our future clergy. I believe that the best place to find our future ordained leadership is right here in the Diocese. It is very difficult to identify and encourage people to move from outside the Diocese. I want us to start identifying and training men and women from within the Diocese to serve here in The Murray.

### **New Hope in Future Strategies**

In conjunction with what Dr. Fopp will be doing, Diocesan Council will be hosting a Future Vision Workshop at Sevenhill in Clare from 2-5 February 2023. The purpose of this Workshop will be to gather key people in the Diocese including Diocesan Council Members, FAI members and others chosen by me. It will be by invitation and those invitations will be going out shortly.

We are going to look at how we can shape the Diocese for the future. We will be looking at the structures of the Diocese, our mission strategies and examining ways to help our Diocese Make Disciples and Love as Jesus loves within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the changing landscape of our Diocese. We need to look at the way in which we deploy people, our assets and the way in which we fund both. When we have done this, we will gather Synod Members for a consultation and briefing so that they may be fully informed. It is my hope that over a period of time we will be able to come together as a Diocese and agree on the future shape of the organization and mission and ministry of the Diocese.

While it is important for me to give some sense of vision and direction, it is vitally important the whole Diocese is content with the new direction, and Synod is vitally important in making this occur. I envisage that Synod Reps will take this information back to their parishes for comment and we will come together again before finally agreeing with the new direction at Synod.

### **New Hope in Christies Beach**

Part of this new future includes the exciting new redevelopment at Christies Beach. Many of you will be aware of the tragedy of the loss of the church building. This devastating loss may have wrecked the hope of the people of the parish, yet wonderfully the amazing people of the parish have held together, and are continuing to meet in the former Rectory, and they fail to give up hope. We in the Diocese are going to have their backs, and we are going to honour their faithfulness, tenacity and hope.

Early next year we will be looking at different plans for the site so that we can rebuild on that site in a manner that will honour their efforts and assist them in looking to the future mission and ministry that they are committed to. I want to say directly to the people of the Southern Suburbs that the Diocese is committed to rebuilding in Christies Beach, and we are committed to the parish, and all parishes in the Diocese. The Future Vision Workshop will help us shape what the redevelopment will look like. There will be a place for the people of Christies Beach to not only worship but to be a place of mission and ministry to a part of our Diocese that desperately needs our love and care.

### **New Hope for the Diocese in the Future**

This brings me to address a strange rumour that seems to be going around the Diocese. The rumour suggests that our Diocese might re-join with Adelaide. I wish to state categorically that no discussions have taken place and there are no plans by me or anyone else to affect such a move. I am totally committed to this Diocese not only continuing but thriving and growing. I have a vision for the Diocese where many of our parishes, especially in high growth areas that have been amalgamated, will be returned to their original parish configurations.

This will be important for the reality is, that it will not be possible for all these to occur, but I hope that many will occur. We have some of the fastest growing parts of South Australia in our Diocese, and there is no reason why we cannot grow and thrive. To do this, though, we will need new leaders, hence our leadership pipeline, we will need new people such as David McDougall, Rodney Fopp, Peter Chapman and Alison Dutton, we will need new strategies and new purposing of people and property such as will be revisioned in February next year, and we will need to have new ideas for the use of our properties such as will occur at Christies Beach, and encourage our people to grow our parishes so that we can expand the number of parishes in the Diocese again.

## **New Hope in Caring for our People**

Many of you will be aware of the rising waters of the River Murray. You will have seen on the news heartbreaking images of people's homes being inundated. I have been asked by a number of people what if anything we can do to help. I am able to tell you that our own ac.care is working very hard to assist people affected by the rising waters. At DC our Chancellor put forward a proposal to establish a Bishops' Disaster Relief Appeal. It demonstrates the pastoral heart of our Chancellor that he would come up with such a wonderful plan. It will be implemented as soon as practicable, but in the meantime if you would like to donate can I encourage you to contact ac.care who will be able to advise you the best means for your contribution to make a difference.

## **Conclusion**

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ, I hope that this letter gives you some sense of the excitement that I feel in my very being about the wonderful future we have in this Diocese. I only have this hope because I have seen how committed you all are. I get that many of you are tired, and maybe even careworn because of all the hard work you have done over the years. I am sorry that it is so long, but it is important that you are informed about issues in the Diocese.

Recently I was reminded of the passage in Isaiah 58. In that passage the people of Israel were wondering with God why they were not being a successful nation. They reminded God that they worshipped him properly and they fasted regularly. God reminded them that what he wanted from them was to remove the pointing finger, the slanderous tongue, God wanted them to do what concerned him, and right worship while important was not the most important item on his list. He challenged the nation to be concerned about the things that God was concentrating on. He wants us to take care of one another, to share food, share our shelter and share our clothing. In other words, God is concerned that we share the necessities of life with those in need.

We can get caught up in all other things, but if these priorities are not at the top of our list, then it is difficult for God to bless us. God reminds his people that when we concentrate on these important issues of neighbourliness then we are able to be strengthened as a people and in our case as a Diocese. If we concentrate only on the things that are important to us, but not necessarily to God, then we will continue to flounder. What I have described above I am confident will help us to identify the issues that are central to God's concern for God's world and will assist us in being truly faithful to the mission and ministry of God, and will assist us in being strengthened and encouraged, and allow us to grow anew and afresh.

I ask and encourage you to keep me in your prayers and what I have described above. I especially ask for your prayers for the success of the Future Vision Workshop in February.

I wish you all a very happy and Holy Christmas and Joyous New Year.

With every blessing to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink. It begins with a small cross symbol (+) followed by the name 'Keith' in a cursive script. Below the name is a large, stylized flourish that resembles a capital 'D' or a similar letter, ending with a small dot.

The Right Reverend Keith Dalby  
Bishop of The Murray