



Tue 13 September 2016

The life and mission of the Anglican Church is to be a spiritual home for people across southern New South Wales and the ACT. Representatives of parishes and other diocesan agencies converged on Goulburn for the meeting of Diocesan Synod from 9-11 September 2016.

Drawing on Jesus' parable (Luke 6.46-49) about houses built on sand and strong foundations, Bishop Stuart spoke about how the church becomes a home. When Jesus' words are worked into our lives, both personally and corporately, the church is not only capable of withstanding the storms that come but a family where people find joy, friendship and renewal that comes from God.

Bishop Stuart spoke about his 3D vision and its deep grounding in Jesus' words. The Diocese is developing its capacity to be a home for others by addressing issues of debt, development and deployment.

The capacity to honour our debts is not simply financial as it is a matter of trust and care. The diocese has made substantial progress in reducing the financial burden of debt. Bishop Stuart indicated that the diocese had reduced its debts by \$3.2 million. Such work is vital during a time of historically low interest rates.

The diocese also has a debt to survivors of those abused by church workers entrusted with their care. He spoke about the steps put in place to care and assist survivors.

'Money can never change the past. It *may* assist victim's lives into future. Redress will cost us millions of dollars. Let me be clear: these outgoings can never repair the enormous damage done to so many people, families and communities. In prioritising their just claims, we are, I believe, demonstrating a living faith,' said Bishop Stuart.

The generosity and sacrifice of many people endowed the Church with property over many years. As a steward, the diocese developed the Jamieson Apartments (Canberra). Many parishes have also done much to improve their buildings which enhances their capacity for ministry. A Property Development Commission has been formed to assist with future projects.

Deployment calls our church to be 'prudently adventurous,' said Bishop Stuart. The diocese continues to stretch expectations and capacity noting that 20 years ago it was among the first to embrace the concept of a permanent diaconate, many of whom work as chaplains across the diocese.

'We deploy 32 deacons. They engage in a range of chaplaincy-styled ministries that extend well beyond the sanctuary doors,' explained Bishop Stuart.

'Our deacons sit with the elderly who are often lonely and isolated, listening to their stories while bringing hope and companionship. They are also engaged with the creative arts using their diverse gifts -including floristry- to bring Christ to our communities. They work on the snowfields, as community nurses and hospital chaplains.'

'They work to create communities where faith can flourish in the business world, new housing developments and among our city's poorest and most disadvantaged residents. Our chaplains - diaconal, priestly and lay - build 'home' around people, right where they live. These spiritual homes are oases founded on Christ and anchored in his amazing grace.'

Bishop Stuart thanked many of the leaders whose tireless efforts make the church a home for many. From those who serve of many councils and commissions through to agencies like Anglicare and the diocesan schools.

'Our risen Lord not only sits on the throne of heaven, but also calls us 'friends' and invites us still to sit with him to talk, listen and learn,' said Bishop Stuart.

The church faces many storms ahead. Yet by taking Jesus' words into its life, it is a home where diverse people become a family together.

A full copy of the presidential address is now available for [download](#).