



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

## **A LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND FROM BISHOP ROSS BAY**

Eastertide greetings to you all. I have written this letter to you a few days prior to my ordination as bishop. Traditionally a separate service of Installation has been held and this has provided the new bishop with the opportunity to address the diocese about future mission and ministry. As the installation ceremony will take place as part of the service of ordination, I am taking this opportunity to communicate with as many of you as possible as you gather for worship the following day. I myself will be in the Cathedral to preach and preside and in my sermon there I will be saying all that follows here.

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks for the incredible support which Jacquie and I have been shown by so many of you in these past months through letters, emails and personal messages. I feel well assured of your prayers for me and for the diocese.

St Augustine of Hippo wrote "I am a bishop for you and a Christian with you". I will endeavour to live this out through my episcopate in this diocese. I came to faith through the ministry of one of our parishes and I have been nurtured through the ministry of many others. I have served nearly all my ordained ministry in the Diocese of Auckland. I love this diocese and care deeply about it and about its clergy and people. I am a Christian with you.

I now accept this call to be a bishop for you. I assume the responsibilities of bishop at what I consider to be a time of exciting opportunity for the Christian Church. More than ever in our society people are talking about religion. Do not become despondent if sometimes that talk is negative, because it always still offers us wonderful opportunities to be part of creative faith conversations. So let us have confidence in the gospel and in ourselves and take hold of those opportunities.

It is into that context that I offer my leadership. Eighteen months ago the diocese undertook a process of consultation to give some shape to a vision for life and ministry in the diocese over the next 5-10 years. Representatives of each parish, ministry unit and chaplaincy gathered at the cathedral to consider together the findings of meetings held locally and in archdeaconries. Some priorities were agreed on, and some of the characteristics of a new bishop were expressed. As a result the Diocesan Council wrote this vision statement for us:

***"A Diocese empowering and equipping the people of God to live out the five-fold mission of the Church in relevant and innovative ways"***

An important early task in my ministry will be to take that vision statement and the ministry priorities that support it, and to work with you to develop a strategic plan that will allow us to achieve ministry goals and grow towards that vision of our life as a diocese. I will undertake this in conjunction with the Diocesan Council and in consultation across archdeaconry groupings. I hope that we can make good progress on that as the remainder of this year unfolds.

Alongside that will be the development of a Bishop's staff team. I have been clear in my desire for there to be an assistant bishop in the diocese. It is my intention that such a person will be based in Auckland and work with me to share Episcopal ministry across the whole diocese. I wish that person to model partnership with me in that task and to allow our shared wisdom to contribute to effective decision making.

I will be looking closely at the archdeaconry structure and in particular how that can be used to support ministry in the north and south of the diocese. I have asked the current archdeacons to continue in their roles in the interim while we make those decisions. The team will also ensure that there is a continued focus on resourcing Local Shared Ministry. Ministry education across the diocese will be another important aspect of the team's work.

I believe in the shape of Anglican mission grounded in local faith communities. As your bishop it will be my task to ensure that ministry is resourced to the best of our ability. For me personally that will involve offering spiritual leadership to the clergy and people of the diocese; it will mean enhancing systems of pastoral care and taking a personal lead in the care of the clergy; and it will require the oversight of the material resources of the diocese so that continued good stewardship can lead to further development opportunities.

Part of what will allow me to achieve this is to build a good knowledge of people and places. So a major focus of my work in this first year will be to make visits to gain an understanding of local ministry strategies and ministry needs. I will put particular emphasis on spending time with local clergy in an effort to develop a good bishop-clergy relationship.

The vision statement speaks of living out our mission in relevant and innovative ways. It is you as the local people of each faith community that must determine what that means for you. I challenge you to form greater connections with the wider communities in which you are placed so that your ministry is genuinely contextual to your situation and the Church is seen as reaching out in service to others and in proclamation of the Risen Christ. In these ways we can work to see God's kingdom come on earth.

I offer these brief reflections from today's gospel reading (John 21:1-19) to encourage you in that task. Never be despondent if the net seems too often empty. Trust Christ and have the courage and the vision to change where the net is cast. Think on Christ who nurtures and feeds us constantly for the work we are called to, and so see the parallels in that lakeside breakfast and in our Eucharist. Think on the ways in which having been fed by Christ we are sent to feed others. And pray for me in the particular way in which God is now calling me to do that within the Church.

It is with Easter hope that I greet you and pledge to work with you and for you. I look forward to the years that lie ahead, and the fulfilment of the vision which God has given to us.

May the peace of the Risen Christ be with us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'R' followed by a flourish, with a small cross symbol to the left.

Ross Bay  
*Bishop*