



The Synod of the Diocese of The Murray  
of the Anglican Church of Australia Inc.

## **Administrator's address to Synod 2026**

As we gather for this annual session of Synod, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which we meet. We renew our commitment to reconciliation grounded in justice and the dignity of every person created in the image of God.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we gather for this third annual session of the 19th Triennial Synod of the Diocese of The Murray, I wish to acknowledge the faithfulness of the people of our Diocese.

This evening, we opened Synod in worship, at Christ the King, Mount Barker. My thanks go to the parish for their hospitality and to the Venerable David McDougall for his preaching.

Throughout our Diocese we find our environment changing in ways that previously we may not have imagined. In some rural areas populations remain static and ageing, while in others we are witnessing extraordinary growth. Here in Mount Barker, the Council forecasts a population of 70,000 people. This represents a fundamental shift in where the parish expected to find itself, and has led them to explore how to respond.

This type of process of adjusting to changed assumptions lead me to reflect on how the disciples felt in the days after the resurrection. In the Gospel of Luke, we find two disciples walking along the road, talking with one another and trying to understand what just happened and trying to explore the implications of all that had transpired around them. In many ways, we in our parishes are also a people on such a journey surrounded by change, seeking to understand what it means for our life and faith. It is therefore important for us on our road to Emmaus, to recognise Christ walking beside us, opening the Scriptures and guiding us as we journey into the unknown.

Over the past year I have travelled widely through our parishes and ministry districts, worshipping in churches large and small, meeting clergy and parish councils, and listening to our communities. I have encountered people who continue quietly and faithfully to love God and serve Christ in the places to which he has called them.

This quiet faithfulness remains one of the Diocese's greatest strengths.



Before we speak about the future, we must acknowledge that across the Diocese, people continue to pray, serve and bear witness. Much of this work is unseen, yet through such ordinary faithfulness the life of the Church continues.

Like those disciples who walked the Emmaus Road, many do not always recognise at first what Christ is doing among us. Yet Christ is already present in all of our journeys.

Over recent years, we as a Diocese have reflected deeply on the changing landscape of Christianity in Australia. We have come to understand that many assumptions which shaped church life in the twentieth century no longer hold in the twenty-first. We are living through a long transition from Christendom into a post-Christian society.

Where previous generations experienced the Church as a central part of community life, today many Australians have little familiarity with Scripture, the life of Jesus, or the language of faith. Increasingly, we minister within a missionary rather than a chaplaincy context.

**Yet this present moment also carries opportunity.**

The decline of cultural Christianity does not mean the disappearance of spiritual longing in the population. In fact, many people today are seeking meaning and hope, despite lacking the Christian story that once shaped our culture. They are searching, though often unsure where to look.

**This situation presents not only a challenge but also an invitation.**

As on the road to Emmaus, Jesus walks alongside those who are searching, even when he is not yet recognised.

As we listen carefully, we discover that he is already at work in places we least expect. The journey before us is not one of creating the Church's future, but of discovering where Christ is already leading his people.

Perhaps one gift of this season in which we find ourselves is that God is inviting us into deeper attentiveness. In a culture marked by noise and anxiety, the Church can recover practices of prayer and discernment. Like those disciples on the road, we too must listen to God's voice as he walks beside us through our local mission fields.

Across the Diocese I see much for which we can give thanks: parishes opening their buildings and hearts to their communities; Licensed Lay Ministers and other volunteers ministering alongside clergy and giving countless hours in service; clergy and lay leaders using a food van and professional band for intentional church planting in urban regions of the Diocese; partnerships with schools and community organisations; people asking new questions about faith and spirituality; parishes engaging in Mission Action Planning and seeking to discover what God may be calling them to become; congregations learning to collaborate across parish boundaries; people discovering fresh confidence in sharing their

faith and serving their communities; a newly ordained priest training in a parish as well as a new person in the discernment program and our Diocesan Council actively looking for ways to support local parish mission.

What has encouraged me most is the commitment of our people to the mission of God. Again and again, I see a willingness to pray and listen for what God is calling us to do.

Our future will not be determined by structures, finances or numbers alone. It will be shaped by our relationship with Christ and our willingness to follow where the Spirit leads.

Every baptised person shares in the ministry and mission of Christ. Therefore, our task is to form disciples who can serve and witness in everyday life. Whatever shape the Church takes, our calling remains the same: to help people encounter Christ on the way and grow as his disciples.

The path ahead will continue to call for wisdom and perseverance. Not every step will be clear.

As we look to the way forward, we must remember that those who came before us acted and built in faith for the generations they would never know. They planted seeds whose fruit they would never see. They proclaimed the gospel and trusted God with a future they could never have imagined.

### **Now that stewardship passes to us.**

We are not the first generation of faithful people in this Diocese called to walk this road by faith, nor will we be the last. It is not our task to master this changing world or control every outcome. That would be a foolish endeavour. Those who came before us tended the fields entrusted to them. Our calling is to do the same: to till the fields and plant the seeds whose fruit we may never see.

This faithful action is not undertaken alone. Jesus says:

*"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

This is of course not a call to stop our mission work and let others do it, but is in fact an invitation to trust and to act.

Our task is not to carry the future upon our shoulders, but to walk faithfully with Christ, discerning where he leads and doing with courage the work given to us in this generation.

As we gather in Synod, I encourage us to listen carefully to one another and speak prayerfully, remaining open to what God may be calling forth among us.

I thank the members of Synod, Diocesan Council, clergy, the Registrar, the Assistant Registrar, the Strategy and Mission Working Group, the Finance, Audit and Investment Committee, the Legislation Review Committee, parish officers, volunteers, and all who serve this Diocese and its mission. Much of this work is unseen, yet it sustains the life of the Church.

I also thank those who have prepared this gathering: worship leaders, facilitators, musicians, technical teams, hosts and catering volunteers.

Finally, brothers and sisters, let us continue to move forward together with humility and courage.

We have much for which to give thanks and every reason to move forward with confidence in God's faithfulness.

The God who called the Church into being continues to lead. **Our task is to remain attentive and faithful, following wherever Jesus may lead.**

Amen.

**The Venerable Simon Waters**  
**Administrator**  
**Diocese of The Murray**