



**The Right Revd Ian Paton**  
Bishop of St Andrews  
Dunkeld and Dunblane  
Scottish Episcopal Church

### **Bishop Ian's Address to Diocesan Synod, 2020**

Dearly beloved friends, guests, and members of Synod:

I welcome you to the 2020 Synod of the Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane. This is a distinctive Diocese with caring congregations, committed ministry, and extraordinary people. It is an honour and privilege to serve you. Thank you all for everything you do and are.

#### **Thankyou**

We are served by many people, and we owe all of them our thanks. Some are moving on after years of fruitful service: our Convener of the Administration Board, John Ferguson Smith; our Synod Clerk, Richard Grosse; our Warden of Lay Readers, Bob Harley; our Coordinator of CMD, Trevor Hart; and others who have served us in significant ways. Others are continuing in their roles: our Dean, Kenny Rathband; our Provost, Hunter Farquharson; our administrative staff, Carol Aitchison and Eleanor McGourty; and many others who give their time and expertise for the work of this Diocese. You are a wonderful group of people, and everything we do together depends on what you do for us.

#### **Ministry**

I also thank all the clergy, lay readers, and retired clergy, and their families. In December the Scottish Episcopal Church celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Ordination of women to the priesthood, at a joyful but reflective service in our own Cathedral here in Perth. At the centre of the celebration were the ministries of those who were ordained 25 years ago, many of them able to be present at the service. But we also prayed for the continuing struggle to achieve freedom, justice and equality for women and girls around the world and in the Church. If humanity is to flourish at all, we need all of humanity to flourish. Women in ministry are among those who have helped us and still help us to move beyond the prejudices and assumptions of the past.

It is not an easy pathway into which our clergy have been called. We can see the toll that it takes on those who serve, and especially on those who serve full-time. The recent Survey on Clergy Well-being was discussed at General Synod last year. It showed how ministry for our clergy is demanding, under-resourced, and sometimes undermined. It revealed that many clergy have experienced bullying and harassment at work. We need to take better care of our professional ministers if we want them to be what they are so able and willing to be for us and with us, and if we want them to be the fulfilled human beings they have the right to be.

#### **Safeguarding**

We also need to take better care of every person, those who are members of a congregation, and those who receive our ministry and support. We need the Church to be a safer place where all people can flourish and be protected, to the best of our ability, from the abuses of power and the betrayals of trust which have been revealed in recent times. When we hear disclosures of abuse by victims and survivors, from people who have been harmed under our care, we need to report it immediately, to the appropriate authority, and be open to the investigation and prosecution of those involved.

This is why Safeguarding training must be taken seriously by clergy, lay ministers, volunteers, vestries, and congregations. Safeguarding has to mean not simply a system of checks and certificates, but the ethos and spirituality of how we respect and trust everyone - children, vulnerable adults, and everyone else.

### **Vestries**

Thank you to every member of every Vestry represented here today. We ask much of those who take on governance responsibilities, and there are increasingly complex charity laws and trustee responsibilities to be met. We need to give people in these roles better resources and support to be able to manage their responsibilities well, because none of us works in solitude or carries the burden of ministry alone.

### **A Parable**

Supporting each other is something the Church must learn again and again as the Body of Christ and the Communion of the Holy Spirit. We do nothing without each other, and we do nothing without God. I like the story that I call "The Parable of the Little Child and the Parent":

*"A parent and their young child were walking along a path, when they came across a large tree trunk that had fallen across the way. The parent encouraged the child to go and move the tree. The child tried and tried, but couldn't move the tree. "Try again," urged the parent, "use all your strength." Again the small child tried to lift it, but it wouldn't budge. The child said, "I'm not strong enough." "Did you use all your strength?" the parent asked. The child nodded that they had. "No, you didn't, because you didn't use me." So, together, they lifted the tree out of the path, and, together, they walked on along the way."*

### **The Diocese**

It is such a pleasure for me when I arrive for a service or a meeting in one of our charges, and am made to feel at home, part of the family. The Bishop does belong in every charge and belongs to every congregation. That is because to be a Christian is to be part of the Church, the *ekklesia*, those who are gathered together, and to be an Episcopalian is to be part of a Diocese gathered together around its Bishop.

But this is a large Diocese composed of very different congregations set in highly varied contexts. Although this means that being a single household across the whole Diocese presents its challenges, we are not a loose federation of congregations. We belong together, and together we can do and be more than we can do or be alone.

Today at this Synod we can be in touch with Diocesan developments and activities that include all of us in every charge. I ask you, therefore, and the vestries and congregations you represent, to set aside the idea of 'the Diocese' as if it were something separate from you. You are the Diocese. We are the Diocese, together.

### **The Church I Hope For**

When I think about the Diocese I am getting to know, and the people I am coming to love as sisters and brothers, I ask myself: 'What do we need in order to become the Church that God is calling us to be?' In response to that question, these are the kinds of hopes that I have:

- That we should learn and re-learn that drawing closer to God is the beginning and ending of everything we are, everything we do. That prayer and worship are central to our life, and that things like the Archbishop of Canterbury's 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative, used all over the world, should be joined in by more of us ([www.thykingdomcome.global](http://www.thykingdomcome.global)).

- That we should develop new ways of using ordained and lay ministries that use more effectively the gifts of the people God sends us. For example, we should more actively discern, train and employ those who are called to serve as ordained deacons ([www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/vocation-and-ministry/ministry-scottish-episcopal-church/](http://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/vocation-and-ministry/ministry-scottish-episcopal-church/)).
- That we should seek to grow in faith ourselves, and learn how to share that faith with others, finding ways to understand better what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and not just a member of the Scottish Episcopal Church. We should foster a deeper knowledge of God in each of us, a greater biblical and theological curiosity, and a deepening of prayer, because faith is not a static thing. The Anglican Communion's emphasis on "Intentional Discipleship" is something which would help us ([www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/intentional-discipleship/](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/intentional-discipleship/)).
- That we should take more seriously our own claim to be a welcoming Church, and consider the demands of being a truly inclusive Church where we don't expect the others to be just like us, indeed we expect and want them to be different. We should celebrate the fact that people in our congregations have different ways of understanding faith, human sexuality, and lifestyle, and we should find out how to listen to those we miss from our churches - young people, people who feel rejected or judged by the church, people who seek for God but prefer to look elsewhere. We should find the confidence to be better known in our communities, pointed out by local people, as centres of love, service and prayer for all. I would like, as an example, to commend what "Perthshire Rainbow Table" is doing in Crieff and other places (<https://standrews.anglican.org/event/perthshire-rainbow-table-st-columbas-crieff-2/>). The resources of "Inclusive Church" may help many of us to go deeper into what being a 'welcoming church' should mean ([www.inclusive-church.org](http://www.inclusive-church.org)).

This may sound to you like a call to perfection! For the majority of my life, it has been clear that being a perfectionist is a bad thing and something that we ought to change. But then Jesus comes along in Matthew's Gospel and says, "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Still, I suspect that a lot of people in our churches will find the idea of achieving any of my hopes idealistic and unrealistic.

But if you want to join me in at least trying, in faith, to achieve any of these hopes, then we should know that we already have many gifts which will help us to meet the challenges.

- Firstly, we are members of the world-wide Anglican Communion, something which will be fully expressed in July this year when I and Carrie participate with bishops from around the world in the Lambeth Conference, on the theme "God's Church for God's World" ([www.lambethconference.org](http://www.lambethconference.org)). The Diocese will be welcoming Bishop Marinez Bassoto from Amazonia, Bishop Paritosh Canning from Calcutta, and Bishop Neil Alexander from the USA. They will be our guests before the Conference, and everyone is invited to welcome them at the Diocesan Gathering at the Cathedral on Sunday afternoon the 19th July, ending with Diocesan Evensong.
- Secondly, we have opportunities to benefit from wider movements in Scotland and beyond, which will benefit the life of each congregation and person. For example, in 2021 we will have the "Year of Pilgrimage," with several Diocesan Pilgrimages (including one to the Holy Land 4-11 Nov 2021; information already sent out to Synod members) and, I hope, many local Pilgrimages of all kinds. Being on a journey together is a good way of renewing our discipleship and that of the Church, "the Pilgrim People of God." The Diocese's information about 2021 has been sent out and is available, as is Provincial information at [www.scotland.anglican.org/2021-provincial-year-of-pilgrimage/](http://www.scotland.anglican.org/2021-provincial-year-of-pilgrimage/).
- Thirdly, we have the commitment and skills of many people. I hope we can learn how to share better, between Charges (perhaps within Area Councils and Linked Charges), the skills of

administrators, treasurers, property conveners, safeguarding coordinators, as well as clergy and lay readers. This would be particularly supportive for our smaller congregations.

- Fourthly, we have many people who would like to offer their time for Ministry to their congregations and communities. We should be actively encouraging some people to consider discernment for ordained or lay reader ministry, but we should also be placing our lay ministries on a firmer and better-supported footing. There will be more information about what is going on in this area during the Synod.
- Fifthly, this is a time in which Ecumenical sharing between different denominations, both locally and nationally, is becoming more urgent. Our larger sister churches in this land are facing the problems of too many churches and too few people, and if the Church intends to serve all the people of our communities and our country, we will have to pray and work more together. There are a number of local ecumenical initiatives happening around the Diocese, and I would welcome the exploration of others. These initiatives will find encouragement in a national initiative between the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Scotland, which will be discussed later this year. Called the “St Andrew Declaration,” this new document expresses a new determination to work together as sister churches, including a clear intention to bring together our different understandings of issues such as the eucharist and the ministry of the bishop. To quote from the document, which I hope both General Synod and General Assembly will affirm in May and June: *“We commit ourselves to respond together to our common calling to proclaim the reign of God to all the people of Scotland by strengthening our partnership in mission and ministry.”*

Perhaps being a perfectionist is not all bad. When Jesus tells the disciples to “be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”, the Gospel uses a Greek word that really means “seeking perfection,” something like “going for goal.” In other words, Jesus is not asking us to be perfect, but to be persistent. And that is what I am asking all of us to do, if we want to become the kind of Church I think we need to be. Being a disciple does not require perfection but persistence. And, like the little child and the parent, it requires that we learn to be persistent together.

With thanksgiving and prayer for all,  
+Ian St Andrews

*The Right Reverend Ian Paton*  
*Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane*  
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