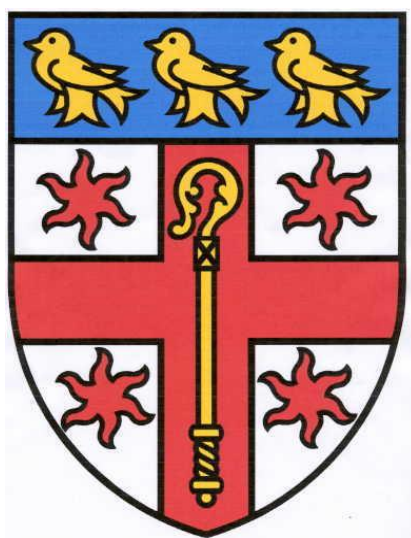


**THE SYNOD OF THE DIOCESE OF ADELAIDE OF THE
ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED**

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE FORTIETH TRIENNIAL SYNOD



THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Saturday, 23 May 2009

BY

ARCHBISHOP JEFFREY DRIVER

Members of Synod,

I welcome you to this special session of Synod called to be the Annual General Meeting of the Synod for the purposes of the Associations Incorporation Act 1985. I will present a full pastoral report to the annual session of Synod, which will be called in October. In this opening address I will confine myself to some reflections on the business before us in this special session.

Today we meet to a number of things:

- To receive the financial reports for the year ended 31 December 2008, fulfilling statutory requirements.
- To consider amendments to the Assessment Ordinance as well as the associated deductions policy and to deal with proposed changes to Synod's financial year.
- To deal with some legislation from General Synod.
- To consider recommended changes to the Anglicare-SA constitution in accordance with the processes set down in that constitution.

Most of the business before us today relates to financial administration and good governance. These two themes have been dominant in world affairs in the past six months. As our own accounts today testify, few parts of the economy have been immune to the effects of the economic crisis triggered through less than responsible governance and financial administration in parts of the world's largest economy.

Doing economics for all

Most of the developed nations, including Australia, have responded to the global financial crisis by trying to stimulate their economies and have needed to go into deficit to do so. Australia's projected cash deficit of \$32.1 billion for the current year will double to \$57.6 billion in 2009-10; equivalent to 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product and the largest since World War II. We are told that Australia's projected budget deficits and net debt, challenging as they might be, will compare favourably with those of most of our trading partners.

It is not my intention here to reflect on the mix of strategies in the Federal Government's budgetary response to the crisis, or upon the Opposition's critique of it.

It is sufficient to note that even within a more conservative approach such as the Opposition seems to be proposing, our nation will face some years of economic constraint and higher levels of unemployment than we have been accustomed to in recent times. The point is that, regardless of who is in Government, the effects of the current global economic crisis will be around for some time and therefore our responses to it will shape what sort of society we bequeath to the next generation.

Recessions come and go and we remember them as the economists define them; periods of negative economic growth. In Australia we had the 1961 Credit Squeeze, the 1980-83 recession and the 1990-92 recession. When positive economic growth returned we were told the recession was over. The problem is that economic recessions tend to leave huge social hangovers. The human price for the 1990-92 recession went on being paid for many years after economic growth resumed. That human price included such things as significant increases in the numbers of long term unemployed and in family breakdown.

Professor Bruce Chapman of the ANU has spoken on the issue of the post-recession incidence of long term unemployment. He has noted, with respect to the 1990-92 recession, that the number of long term unemployed did not return to pre-recession levels until 2005. In 1990 the number of long term unemployed had been about 120,000; those numbers grew to 350,000 in 1995, three years after the recession officially ended. A similar, if somewhat less dramatic story applied after the recession of the early 1980s.

In addition to those who were defined as unemployed, there was also a large group who were dropped off the edge by the recession – those who left the employment context altogether and went into welfare dependency.ⁱ What this meant following the 1990-92 recession was that the full-time male work force never completely recovered, dropping from 62% to 54% of the male working-age population.

In the economic good times that have just ended the welfare dependent and long time unemployed were marginal beneficiaries. The appetite for labour was met by looking elsewhere. As George Megalogenis of *The Australian* has noted, 80% of the employment growth in the last full year of the boom (2007) was met by migrants who had arrived over recent years. The employment victims of the 1990-92 recession had

become too disconnected from the world of work to be seen as a valuable source of employees. They had become employment exiles.

We know that the 1990-92 recession left more than employment victims. Family breakdown is all too often an outcome of financial distress; when unemployment hit many households in that recession, there was a longer term price to be paid in terms of the health of those families. An indicator of that is the number of children in alternative care. In South Australia, the number of children under seventeen in out-of-home care went up 74 per cent in the ten years to last year.

The early Greeks were the first to coin the phrase “economy” (oikonomia). For Aristotle it was management of a household, or the State, so as to increase its value to every member over the longer term.ⁱⁱ This ancient economic aspiration of ensuring that every member of the household was included in the benefits of its management has a particular relevance to our present difficult times. If Australia is to avoid a long term social “hangover” from the present economic crisis it is vitally important that measures by Federal and State Governments over several budget cycles should focus not just on infrastructure development and short term economic stimulus; they should have as a clear priority the goal of long term inclusion of the most marginalised.

There should be a sustained education and employment orientation to ensure that we keep to a minimum the numbers of Australians who become employment and opportunity exiles as so many did following previous recessions. The Church will have its part to play and I am confident that Anglicare-SA will shape its priorities for the coming years around these needs and all the more so as we continue to develop partnerships between Anglicare and the parishes, schools and other agencies within the diocesan family.

The economy of God

As you will hear in the detailed reports to follow, the global financial crisis has had an impact on the Diocese. Overall the equities market fell by 41% in 2008 but is now slowly improving. Our funds managed by the ADF, or Anglican Funds as they will be known, suffered a reduction of 30% in capital value and will provide a disbursement reduced by 10%.

Other metropolitan dioceses have experienced greater declines in the capital value of their investments and decreases in income from those investments in the order of 40 to 50 per cent. The main reason for the difference is that Adelaide adopted the prudent policy of only distributing 6% of the value of its funds, preserving and growing the real capital value over time, cushioning the diocese and other investors from market fluctuations. Some other dioceses have distributed all investment income and, without this cushion against market fluctuation, have had to face major budget cuts.

While the financial results before us are not those we would have expected or hoped for 12 months ago, in the present climate they are more than acceptable, reflecting the good work done by our ADF Board and staff under the leadership of Allan Perryman as chair and Grant Reubenicht our Finance Manager.

Today as this Synod debates its own budget and a number of financial measures, there is another ancient use of the word “oikonomia” (economy) that should inform its deliberations. The writer of the Letter to the Ephesians speaks of the “oikonomia” of God as being focussed on the fulfilment of all things in Christ.ⁱⁱⁱ Similar language was used by the early Church Fathers. The “oikonomia” of God is the divine self ordering directed towards the redemption of the world. It is forever outgoing, never reluctant or self-invested. It is the spendthrift economy of self-giving, self-sacrificing love.

In times of financial constraint there is always greater pressure to take a conserving approach, to put our energy into holding on to what we have, rather than risking what we have in the pursuit of what might be. Difficult times do require prudent stewardship. Yet if we are to live as God’s people, there is no escaping the divine economy to which the Writer to the Ephesians refers; the ordering of the household of God has to be about the self-giving mission of God in the world. We cannot be faithful and be about anything else or anything less.

There are a number of matters we will consider today that are intended to shift us a little further down the road from maintenance to mission. The draft deductions policy is one example, with its shift in emphasis from maintenance expenses towards supporting fresh initiatives in mission. Challenging as they may be, these administrative and financial changes will be necessary if we are to be a growing

church as opposed to being a declining church of the status quo. They are part of that ongoing journey through which we are called, and find ourselves, once more in mission.

As we meet today, with a largely financial and administrative agenda, we cannot avoid the implications of a crisis in the world economy. As we meet today, we must be mindful of our responsibility as trustees and stewards for the prudent economic management of the Diocese of Adelaide. But as Synod we meet above all as the People of God and it is the economy of God that we must dare to allow prevail in our midst; that ordering of the household of God for the mission of God beyond the Church and in the world.

May this session of Synod be preoccupied with the economy of God!

+Jeffrey

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- ⁱ Professor Bob Gregory of Victoria University and ANU, previously a board member of the Reserve Bank, has posited that recessionary rises in unemployment are followed by increases in the number of people on disability, carer and sole-parent pensions. He makes the point that a year or two after a recession, half the men on disability benefits have come from the unemployment pool, where they have been in and out of jobs for some time. It is usually men aged over 55 years.
- ⁱⁱ Aristotle contrasted “economy (oikonomia) with “acquisition” (chremastatics). While “economy” was the long term management for every member, “acquisition” was the maximising of wealth by those who controlled it.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ephesians 1.10: “as a plan (oikonomian) for the fullness of time to gather up all things in him; things in heaven and on earth”. See also Eph. 3.9