

Why Synod matters, why the Diocese matters



Peter Adam

We should be concerned about long-term gospel growth, reformation, and more effective ministry throughout the Diocese.

Participation in Synod is one way to work together to achieve these goals. Synod passes laws, votes on motions, determines priorities, elects people to committees, and elects the Archbishop.

Although we cannot all be active throughout the year in serving on committees, we should go to Synod and vote to support our brothers and sisters who are able to do so, and elect others to join them.

If you are a member of Synod, then your membership brings spiritual responsibility and accountability to God. Non-participation is a definite act which has consequences. We tend to underestimate the significance of sins of omission, of things we don't do, but they are significant.

We are all gradually growing in holiness, or growing in ungodliness. This is true of each believer, of each minister, of each church, of each Christian organisation, of each Christian school, and it is true of each Diocese.

The larger the organisation, the slower it is to change, either in growth in holiness, or in ungodliness.

Many people find Synod hard to engage with, and hard to participate in. If you do not know people, you do not know who to vote for. Join the New Cranmer Society to become better informed and get advice on how to vote. <https://www.newcranmer.org.au/>

I encourage clergy to get involved in at least one committee in the Diocese or in Synod. I encourage ministers to find suitable lay people to stand for Synod and so get involved in the Diocese. Lay people also have a responsibility for the welfare and spiritual progress of the Diocese.

In the longer term it is good to develop and put forward positive ideas and programs in Synod. We should be supporting positive ideas and programs, and not just attacking bad ones. And if others put forward positive ideas, then support them!

Here is some advice about speaking in Synod.

- i. Ensure that your speech is relevant to the current issue being debated.
- ii. Do some research on the topic, so that you can make a useful contribution.
- iii. Prepare a respectful, appropriate, good-tempered, and short speech. Make only 1 or 2 points and make them clearly.
- iv. Prepare a positive speech. You may include the negative consequences of your positive viewpoint, but don't do the negatives without the positives, and give the positives more energy and time. Work out what positive values you stand for and proclaim them.

- v. Assume good motives in other speakers, even you suspect otherwise. You do not know why people say what they say. It is unpleasant to have other people assume that you have bad motives: don't do it to others.
- vi. Appeal to the middle ground of Synod: your friends agree with you, people with other convictions are unlikely to change their minds: try to gain widespread support by the way you speak and the arguments you use.
- vii. Speak slowly and clearly, so everyone can hear you.
- viii. Be good-humoured if possible.
- ix. Sit near a microphone and move quickly!

PS: I always made it a policy not to sit in a block of like-minded people, but to sit among people who were not my tribe. I did this to try to break down the 'us' and 'them' mentality, and to enable middle-ground people to see that there was a variety of view possible among general Synod members.

If I got too bored, I would go and have a coffee to catch up with people!

More broadly, pray!

- Pray to the Lord of the harvest to raise up gospel workers, ordained and lay, for the Diocese [as well as beyond]. Future ministers are in your congregation, your youth group, your children's ministry. The next minister after the one after you may be in your creche! One effective way to transform a Diocese is to raise up the next generation of ministers. I love going to inductions of new ministers, because it so often the case that this person will grow gospel and Bible ministry in this church.
- Pray for the Archbishop, Bishops, Diocesan Council and Synod, that God would rule his church through them, and transform and grow it in godliness and good ministry.
- Pray that God would frustrate the plans of those opposed to gospel ministry and godliness.
- Pray for vacant parishes, that God would supply them with good ministers.
- Pray for good people engaged close with the Diocese and with Synod, that God would support and encourage them, and prosper their ministries.

PS. The Synod in October 2019 is especially important!

Synod elections function in a three-year cycle, and that cycle begins again with this Synod.

If all you can do is vote, then do so! Get the New Cranmer advice, and follow it!

The Rev Dr Peter Adam trained for the ministry at Ridley College and was ordained in St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne in 1970. He completed his London BD at King's College and gained his MTh at Durham where he received his PhD in systematic theology.

After serving twenty years as the Vicar of St Jude's Carlton he was appointed Principal of Ridley Melbourne and was later awarded an OAM for his service to the Anglican Church and to theological education.

Peter has spoken at preaching training conferences, and Bible and missionary conventions throughout Australia, and in England, Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Switzerland, New Zealand, Singapore, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Canada and USA.

Peter is a former President of the New Cranmer Society