



The Right Reverend Stuart Robinson
Diocesan Bishop

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Christmas Message from Bishop Stuart **December 2017**

Beloved in Christ,

Greetings!

In my morning bible reading with my wife, Jane, I was struck afresh by Jesus' statement in his prayer in John 17:2 that God had given him, 'authority over people'. That authority sees its outworking in Jesus' gift of eternal life to those who would receive it (verse 2). Remarkable. Authority used in such a way that it serves and blesses those over whom it is exercised. And it's authority refined in the crucible of humility and apparent weakness; the Incarnation and the Passion. He who wears the crown is subject to both cradle and cross.

This Christmastide – my last with you, I do want to encourage you to pursue the kind of leadership and witness that Jesus manifests. He uses authority and power to bring wholeness and reconciliation. May we be a salve and a balm to a weary world as we point them to him who has 'authority over all people that he might give them eternal life' – John 17:2.

I do also want to use this opportunity to say, again, how much Jane and I have enjoyed our fellowship with you. We have been so privileged to see 'the love of Jesus transforming individuals and communities'. In fact, just last weekend, a lady left her street stall and embraced Jane and with tears in her eyes, described her new found relationship with Jesus and expressed her joy at being connected (by Jane) with a local church. And whilst we've been deeply saddened by accounts of abuse and betrayal by church leaders, there are also many stories of people being reconciled to local communities of faith and recommitting their lives to Christ. Yesterday, I conducted another formal apology with a family (who'd endured unspeakable abuse) and it was such a privilege to pray with them as we concluded. Many thanks for *your* ongoing prayer in this arena.

Jane and I will conclude our ministry among you with a Diocesan farewell – in the form of a ‘Laying Up Of The Staff’ service, in St. Saviour’s Cathedral on Saturday March 31st at 11.00am. Other ‘farewells’ will be made at the Ordination in February and the one day synod in March. Our plan, once we leave, is to have a family holiday (including grandchildren) in Cornwall, UK and then start work in the parish of St. Michael, Vacluse, Sydney in May 2018. It is our plan to sell our house in Goulburn.

I must also reference the imminent departure of my very dear colleague and Episcopal Assistant, Dr Matthew Brain. Bishop Matt and Rachael and their children are Bendigo bound. A friend said Bishop Matt is now to be known as ‘Ben 10’ – as he’ll be Installed as the tenth Diocesan Bishop of Bendigo on February 17th. We have been so blessed by the Brain’s fellowship and ministry; they will be greatly missed. Given that all five children need to be placed in schools for first term 2018, I have given Bishop Matt leave to hand over all his ministry responsibilities in order to begin a rapid disengage/re-engage process. Please do pray for Bishop Matt and his family in this time of very significant transition.

Synods-people will recall our celebration of the 25th anniversary of women being ordained Priest in the church of God – in C&G. Canon Gill Varcoe, who delivered our Synod sermon, further reflects on this epochal event in the current issue of *Anglican News*.

Kindly uphold my colleague, Bishop Trevor Edwards, as he takes on the role of Diocesan Administrator early next year. It is complex role made even more so with the absence of two bishops.

God’s every blessing to you this Christmas and into Epiphany,

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Stuart Robison', with a cross symbol to the left and a horizontal line below it.

The Right Reverend Stuart Robison
Bishop Canberra & Goulburn
13 December 2017