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Dear Friends,

You will now know that I have been elected as the next Bishop of Bendigo.

Being able to serve God and his people is a great privilege and I rejoice in this new opportunity to serve. Yet my excitement at opportunities to serve and grow alongside brothers and sisters in Christ in a new place is coloured by the reality of leaving you. Since arriving in Canberra & Goulburn at the beginning of 2010 the Brain 'mob' has flourished as we have been able to partner with so many saints who love Jesus and work hard to live this love out in their day to day lives. You have been very good to us. Thank you.

The Diocese of Bendigo shares many values and characteristics with Canberra & Goulburn. Indeed its vision is to "... transform society through the gospel of Jesus Christ by building healthy mission-shaped faith communities." What a great call. Many of the changes we have sought to make, and priorities we have sought to keep are shared in the Diocese Bendigo and I am following a very able bishop (+Andrew Curnow) and will go to work alongside godly and faithful clergy and lay people.

I have been very blessed to have worked alongside you all, however I want to particularly thank +Stuart for the care, trust and support he has given me. +Trevor and Trevor Ament have also been brilliant mentors and fantastic friends. The colleagues I have had the privilege of working with in the ADS and Bishop's office deserve my heartfelt thanks and I commend their selfless and often thankless work to you.

May I encourage you with the words from last week's epistle (1 Cor 1:7-9)

*Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

In the midst of change we can be sure that God not only has our best interests at heart, but is active in providing for our needs.

As you prepare for a season of discernment and change it is my prayer that God will hold you in the palm of his hand, and that you will be able to perceive his kindness and enabling Spirit.

Yours servant in Christ,

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Matt Brain