

Announcement: Appointment as Dean of Sydney, 8/8/2021

*With apologies to those who heard it first on the radio or read it on social media or in the Mercury, ... below is what I announced at our church meetings online on 8th August 2021. I encourage you to **read (or possibly re-read) it all**. In addition, here is some extra related news...*

*I am very pleased to inform you that Bishop Peter Hayward has confirmed with the Wardens the **appointment of Anthony Douglas** to serve as Acting Rector after my departure.*

For anyone who does not know, Anthony is the Archdeacon assisting the Bishop of Wollongong. His family and he (when not needed elsewhere) attend our 7pm congregation. Anthony was previously the Rector of Shoalhaven Heads.

Anthony will commence as Locum on 8 November (the day after my final Sunday at work, when I go on annual leave) and will then become Acting Rector from when I begin as Dean of Sydney.

Anthony is also in the process of organising a full Chapter meeting on behalf of Bishop Hayward.

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Dear Friends, exactly one month ago, Kanishka Raffel rang me out of the blue to ask me to **consider becoming the next Dean of Sydney**. For those unfamiliar with Anglican terminology, that means Senior Minister of St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney, the central church of the Diocese.

To cut to the chase, I have accepted the position. So let me tell you a little of how I reached that decision... It is not the kind of position you apply for. And after the distraction of being nominated for Bishop of Armidale last year, I have not been looking for a move.

And yet I have always thought you must take the request of your Archbishop very seriously. Bishop Peter Hayward also encouraged me in that.

So Karyn and I talked together, and with Kanishka and his wife (seeing as he'd just served in the Sydney Cathedral role), and I consulted the local members of our own Cathedral chapter.

Chapter members were encouraging and thoughtful in their advice. After weighing all this, I concluded that my departure would not significantly damage the welfare of the parish here. By God's grace, there is a strong depth and breadth of leadership across the congregations.

Now on Tuesday night just gone, the Sydney Cathedral Chapter unanimously concurred with the Archbishop's nomination of myself to fill that role.

I am very conscious of the privilege of serving as Dean, as with any role as a minister of Christ Jesus. But people think I might have something to offer, and I can see that experiences God has given me at Wollongong have helped prepare me.

Back when we agreed to come here, I was not looking for a move either. I came because of the direct personal request of the Archbishop of that time, Peter Jensen, and because of the unselfish advice of the local lay elders at Kurrajong, even though we had been there less than six years.

So I say now what I said way then: We believe Romans 8:28, that in all things God works for good of those who love him, called according to his purpose: to make us more like Jesus. If we stay, we know he'd work for good, both in Wollongong and in Sydney; as we go, he'll work for good, both in Wollongong and Sydney.

However there are right and wrong reasons for making a decision - like going for ambition or feeling flattered; like staying simply because it is comfortable living and so good ministering here.

It is humbling to have the confidence of the Archbishop and Chapter. Alongside a fresh challenge, it is also a bit daunting – I'm told that if we've had heritage issues here, then just wait and see about the challenges with their cathedral! And change is not easy.

So we feel sad about leaving people we love and the ministry we've gladly served for almost 17 years. When I told the staff team on Thursday, the reality started to hit home and I got a bit teary.

When presented with change, the best thing to do is trust God's providence, for he is good. St Michael's seems united in Christ and happy working together, even during the challenges of COVID19. I find further confidence by observing that the St Michael's staff, Parish Council and membership are full of thoughtful, godly, and gifted biblical Christians.

Some time ago on a parish anniversary, Reg Piper said his review of our history showed unbroken evangelical witness, from the 1820s and 30s, and without major moral scandal, over what is now almost two centuries. God's grace has been at work here.

I am also very confident in the membership of our cathedral chapter. (The local members are our three Wardens: Greg Engel, Luke Thompson, Rob Thomas; alongside them are Peter Kell, Stacey Chapman and Michelle Gajus Read.) They are the regional advisory body, charged, alongside the Archbishop, with finding a new Senior Minister for St Michael's. They are independently thoughtful and discerning, focused on Christ, and biblically faithful. There will be some very fine candidates for them to consider. Pray for them on their work.

We can all be challenged by words from 1 Corinthians 3 that Kanishka quoted when he was elected Archbishop. The context was the Corinthians saying, "I follow Paul", or "I follow Apollos", rather than seeing they belonged to Christ alone. But 1 Cor 3:5-9 remind us that although one man plants the seed of the Word of God, and another waters it, it's *only ever God who gives the growth*. Further, v.11 says that *Jesus Christ is the only solid foundation* for life and ministry.

These words remind you – and me – that I am certainly not indispensable here, or anywhere. It's also part of why I so value team ministry and a team pulpit. And my successor will be different from me, but that's not only to be expected, but good. That is, I am sure he will share the same biblical convictions. But he will certainly do some things better than me. And he will take other good initiatives that I, with my limitations, would never have thought of.

People planted before us. We have watered what was planted, and have planted some more. Others will water and plant after us. But any growth that has occurred has happened only by God's grace, not because of any superior skill or wisdom.

As for the timing, I expect that **Sunday 7th November** will be our last Sunday at work here. Following about 4 weeks' annual leave, Lord willing, we anticipate starting at St Andrew's in the second week of December.

Please pray in the emotional grieving process we and others will experience, as we prepare to leave. But we are here to give it our all for the next few months. So pray we can get on with gospel ministry. In all this, let's fix our eyes on Jesus. He endured the cross for us, and he is the pioneer and perfecter of faith. Our Lord Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever – faithful forever.