



Archbishop of Canterbury's speech at dinner for the 175th anniversary of the Adelaide Diocese

It's a great honour to be here and extraordinary that so many people should be here this evening, and thank you very, very much. Congratulations to the 175 years of work that you have been doing, it's absolutely... When you think what it was like when people came here, it's extraordinary. I've been much moved by the openings of everything I've gone to over the last few days, both in West Australia and here. Therefore, would echo my acknowledgement that we are on Kurna land and the recognition and attribution to the elders past, present and emerging. Particularly, many happy returns to Bishop Chris. I hope and pray that the ministry that he exercises in the work of Bishop for indigenous people, for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders will continue to flourish and to develop, and be given higher and higher priority in this country.

Because it's obviously one of the great things that around the world we're learning, and it's very, very important indeed. Your first bishop, 175 years ago at the same time as the state was founded, Augustus Short, was a man of remarkable vision, extraordinary vision. He saw the vision of a country that he couldn't possibly have imagined, because there wouldn't have been the pictures. there wouldn't have been the ways of finding out about it. But he sensed the call of God, and he may have been short by name but he was not short by imagination, in contrast to the current Archbishop of Canterbury. In 2016, on the centenary of the first day of the Somme, the Battle of the Somme in France, I was asked to go to France and do a prayer at the centenary. We stayed the previous night in a little village not far away, and in the morning, as we were setting off. We were going out of the hotel and a voice across the hotel said to someone they were standing next to but a bit loudly and we heard, "Isn't that the Archbishop Canterbury?"

The other bloke said, "No, too short," so I'm really sorry if I disappointed you. If we go back to that time in Adelaide in 1914, 108 years ago, early in July, they probably have had a report that said that an obscure Austro-Hungarian prince had been shot dead in Serbia or what's now Serbia. I very much doubt that an equivalent gathering then would've thought much about it. Yet, that event was triggering what in over the next four years would kill tens of thousands of Australians, and tens of millions of their fellow human beings around the world, that would destroy three empires and cripple two more. We don't know what the future will bring, any more than Augustus's Short could then have imagined now. So, the question in each generation for the church and for society, but I believe the church has to be the path finder for society, is not as was quite rightly said earlier, looking in the rear view mirror, though that's important. But it's looking forward and it's looking around, it's understanding our context, understanding our history and understanding our future.

The political philosopher, Edmund Burke said, in his essay on the French Revolution in 1792, that the social contract is a covenant between those who have lived in the past, those who live today, and those who are yet to be born. It's an extraordinarily powerful statement, it's one that perhaps with the understanding of the land that the Aboriginal peoples of this land and the Torres Strait Islanders would understand very well. Our



covenant with the past, our covenant with those around and our covenant with those yet to be born. When we look around, it is easy to be depressed and scandalised among the day to day problems, 52 wars around the world, including Ukraine, Russia. The economic crisis that is afflicting so many countries, with whole swaths of Africa now registering as in imminent danger of the most severe famine for decades because of the cutting off of grain and the rapid inflation in energy prices. With food bank use in the UK quadrupling in the last year, even when there's no unemployment, we have the lowest unemployment we've had in 45 years.

With pressure on society, most of all, as you've seen in Australia, in Melbourne in the last few days, pressures on our societies in the secularising countries of how to deal with truths that conflict in that case. I'm not going to go into detail or comment on that, but it seems to me to be a wider importance. But in that case, in Melbourne, the truth that homophobic behaviour is entirely wrong, and the truth that freedom of religion and belief is an essential part of any civilised society. The list of things that we can worry about are endless, the context in which we're living is threatening. President Zelenskyy in Ukraine said in a BBC interview yesterday, talked of Russia's potential use of nuclear bombs, tactical nuclear weapons, and the consequences of their use would be dramatic and extreme. It may be very far from here, but we all know here from the experience of two world wars that what happens on the other side of the world today can be very much a reality here tomorrow.

But it's not a case for fear, because at the heart of what we do as Christians, and I'm assuming that one of the reasons you are here is either you belong to a church or you at least have some contact with someone that does. So, please forgive me if I'm making assumptions about faith, I'm not, I'm just talking generally. But for Christians of all churches, the heart of what we have to do is to be aware of the world around, to be aware of our history, the 175 years and what it has produced. To be aware of where God is needing us in the future, because that the heart of faith is not a series of rules about good behaviour, is not a moral code, although they're both of huge importance. But is a relationship with God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, who lived as a human being, died on a cross, was raised from the dead, ascended to Heaven, and sends the Holy Spirit of God to be with us today, to give us wisdom, direction and strength.

Whether you are the average Anglican, which is a woman in her thirties on less than \$4 a day, living quite likely in Sub-Saharan Africa, quite likely a 50/50 chance in a zone of warfare, immediate post-warfare or persecution or a combination. Whoever you are, you and I are called to live in today's world. Not to circle the wagons and try and exclude the world, but to live in today's world and engage with it at every level. So, the first point, and that's about the first half of what I want to say is let us be realistic about the world. Over the last 40 years, all the great faiths of the world, including Christianity, have seen a sharp rise in fundamentalist extremism. Fundamentalism usually leads to a slightly sectarian approach which says, "Only we have the truth." The next stage is where people say, "Only we have the truth, and God has made it our job to do his work of making sure everyone knows and believes and has the truth that we have imposed on them."

The church has done that over the centuries millions of times, and invariably, with disastrous effects. Jesus did the opposite, when he was alive he was funny, most of the parables have a joke in them, we're so serious when we read them. Think of the parable of



the good shepherd who goes to find the sheep, shepherds were notoriously scummy people, bit of a, in your language, mob. They'd sit around, they carried knives, because it was a dangerous job and they weren't afraid to use them. People told shepherd jokes in those days, like they used to tell, I don't know whatever you told in Australia. But in England we used to tell Irish jokes, in France they told Belgian jokes, and in Switzerland, they told French jokes.

So, when Jesus says there was this [shepherd, everyone thought this is going to be a good one.. There was this shepherd and he had 100 sheep, and he lost one, typical shepherd. So, he left the 99 alone in the wilderness and went to find the one, stupid man, typical shepherd, leave 99 sheep. Then Jesus says, "God's like that, God's like that," and they all go... The church, his job, is to live in a way that makes no sense if God does not exist, I'm quoting someone there. I'm not that clever, but that is our job. So, in a world where fear and insecurity are so easily able to overwhelm us and cause us, as has happened in every major faith over the last 40 years, it's a sociological, not a theological thing, for in each faith groups of extremists together who want to keep the world out and keep themselves pure.

That is not our job, our job is to get out there and change things. Our job is to have the imagination to say, "God can change things, we just have to go with him and do what he tells us to," take Anglicare, I had three visits today, one to a parish, and one to a place looking after people who come out the care system, and one to a place that looks after people who've been homeless, sleeping rough, and gives them a home and loves them and cares for them. That is looking around, trusting God, and changing lives, one at a time. The parish had built a community garden, and it's amazing, a stroke of imagination from the people there when they were doing some mission action planning.

Incredible gift to the spirit, they change things and people start coming along, because they see a church that has activity. It doesn't have to be huge, I just has to be committed to being available to God, which in biblical language is called holiness. Holiness isn't about being pure and never looking twice in the wrong direction. Holiness is about saying to God, as Isaiah did, "Here am I, send me. Here are we, send us," that's what the diocese has done at its best over 175 years. When it's confident about its message, confident about its mission, confident about its God, we don't have to be confident about the future. It's above our pay grade, that's God's job. Leave it to him, he's been doing it for a while and he's pretty good at it.

So, that's really what I want to say to you in the short time this evening, God called this diocese into being through putting a seed of imagination into Bishop or Augustus Short's mind and those with him. God calls this diocese today in our present world to continue with that radical imagination that says, "We need not worry about the future, but we will tackle the present, lay and ordained, everyone from the youngest to the oldest, because God has a call and a mission for everyone without any exception." God will cause this diocese to be filled with ever greater life when we are open to his call, faithful in our action, and obedient in our hearts. But for that to happen, we have to draw close to God every person, to the God who doesn't say to us, "When you are good enough, you can get close to me."



But to the God who says, "I am closer to you than the beating of your heart, I love you more than the person who knows you best and loves you most, and I know you better than them, and I love you more than them, believe it or not." Who says, "I call you to more excitement, adventure, fear, drama, imagination, then in your wildest thinking you could begin to have." A diocese or a church that gets hold of that, or an individual, will change the world. The church around the world, the churches that do that, and I've seen some. The churches that do that, even in very secular societies, will find themselves with a number of problems. How do we get everyone in because we haven't got enough room? How do we cope with the abuse that it generates? Because Jesus says, "That's part of the job ticket," and how do we give adequate thanks to God for the wonderful things he's doing among us as he's doing among you? Thank you.