

The Restoration of St Paul's Cathedral: Update

Melbourne Anglican Synod

Saturday 4 September 2004

The Very Reverend David Richardson, Dean of Melbourne

On Thursday morning at a sub committee of Chapter called "the Focus Group" - I opened an unofficial time capsule that had been discovered during the restoration of the Cathedral's South West Spire. The capsule - a lead envelope - contained a linen cloth with on one side elevations of the twin spires and on the other the names of the workers present at the laying of the final stone on 23 December, 1927. A competition for people 18 and under to guess the contents was won by a student at Christ Church Grammar School, Lauren. When a new time capsule is installed in the Moorhouse Spire her name and photograph will be included.

The Cathedral Restoration and Renewal Appeal is now around 2 ½ years old though it was only on 1 April this year that we "went public" with an event in the Cathedral to which all parishes and agencies in the Diocese were invited and at which the Premier spoke of the importance of St Paul's in this most strategic Melbourne precinct.

It was in 2001, just before the meeting of General Synod in Brisbane, that an emergency meeting of Chapter authorized me to spend money to see how significant the problems were. The symptoms were obvious, exfoliating stones landing on the roofs and on the ground.

As I speak to you now we have raised in gifts, promises and pledges just short of \$11 million, i.e. nearly ½ million more than when my report was written for Synod. This extraordinary result, reflecting support from Federal, State and local Government, the Diocese of Melbourne, some parishes, some schools and a number of generous private individuals, is testimony to the importance and significance of St Paul's Cathedral to the Australian and Victorian community. In thanking those parishes which have already given I remind you that gifts to the Cathedral Restoration are not part of the parish's assessable income. Our first target of \$15 million to restore and renew the Cathedral building itself is now within our grasp. Our larger goal of \$20 million for the restoration and renewal of the cathedral buildings, the establishment of the Education Centre perhaps a visitors centre and the establishment of the sure foundations for our future mission and ministry looks increasingly, in light of the success to date, achievable. We do know of course that it's the second half of a marathon that is the hardest, and there is still a long way to go.

In front of me you see a painting depicting the proposed new processional doors inside the great West doors. Three artists were invited to submit schemes for these doors and three solutions were offered:

- a bronze/brass solution
- a mosaic solution, and
- a glass solution.

The Chapter invited a panel of experts including Professor Margaret Manion (Professor of Fine Arts), Gerard Vaughan (CEO NGV), Albert McPherson and Robert Bruce, an architect, with some others to assess the entries and give advice. The unanimous advice of the experts was to adopt the glass solution which uses the French technique *dalle de verre* well known to Victorians because of the

Leonard French ceiling in the NGV. Indeed designer and artist of our doors Janusz Kuzbicki has acquired Leonard French's remaining glass some of which will be used in the Cathedral making a link between St Paul's and our near neighbour the NGV.

With the doors will come too a new podium running across the full width of the Cathedral. The front steps will be moved out to abut the footpath in Flinders Street. The podium will also allow access for those with disabilities.

Light is another aspect of the restoration. St Paul's is famous for its "dim religious light" but much of the wiring is over 70 years old and in urgent need of replacement. I should like to tell you of two aspects of light which are being explored. One is the removal of some panels at the base of the central spire to create a "Lantern" Tower over the chancel; the other is the possibility of replacing our gas heating and other power with solar heating and solar power. This accords with the spirit of the motion at this Synod about the Kyoto protocol and the question asked last night about Churches modelling conservation of energy. Neither of these proposals has final approval from Chapter; indeed the solar energy proposal is in a very tentative phase, but the notion of St Paul's as a "green Cathedral" has certainly been hinted at in discussions, is taking root and may, we hope, if you will excuse the mixed metaphor, grow legs.

It is easy probably for you of the diocese - even for us at St Paul's it can be dangerously and seductively easy, to get the feeling that the "Restoration" is an end in itself. It is especially tempting for me for I have a strong doctrine of Cathedrals. But Cathedrals are only necessary because of one's theology of the Kingdom of God, the Church, one's theology of mission and one's recognition that the Church is an agent and servant of God's kingdom. Cathedrals can be converting spaces; their ministry as evangelistic opportunities is primary.

In my report to Synod you will see a series of questions which underline the theological direction of our work at St Paul's.

- Is the Gospel being proclaimed?
- Is the faith of the people being deepened?
- Are lives being nourished and transformed?
- Are the downcast finding hope?
- Are human dignity and justice being furthered?
- Is God being glorified?
- Is the integrity of creation being safeguarded?

These are at the basis of all we are doing, the driving force behind the Chapter's commitment to restoration and renewal. That may explain why we have been as successful as we have.

My thanks to all of you for your enthusiasm and support.

I am pleased to move the acceptance of my report.