The Messenger

Parish of St Thomas, Tāmaki
Summer Edition 2025

A break-out group at the 2025 diocesan Synod

Contents

Peace with Creation: A Quiet Covenant

Noel Cox

As November unfolds, the signs of change are all around us. The days grow warmer, the evenings lengthen, and the earth seems to awaken with new life. It is a time when we are reminded not only of the beauty of creation, but of our place within it – and of the peace to which God calls us.

Scripture is full of imagery drawn from nature. Jesus teaches us using mustard seeds and lilies. The psalms sing of rivers clapping their hands and trees shouting for joy. Creation is not just a backdrop to the story of salvation – it is part of the story. From the beginning, God saw that it was good.

Yet peace with creation is never something we can assume. Our world bears the wounds of pollution, loss of biodiversity, climate instability, and the overuse of land and sea. The Earth is groaning, and the poor often suffer first and most when the balance of creation is disturbed. As followers of Christ, who is called the Prince of Peace, we are called not only to love our neighbours, but also to tend the garden God has entrusted to us.

St Thomas' grounds

At St Thomas, this may feel a long way from our everyday routines – yet peace with creation can begin in very local, very ordinary ways. Planting something. Reducing waste. Walking more. Choosing

kindness toward all living things. Teaching our children to notice and love the world God made. Even the lawns outside our church building are a reminder that we are stewards of soil as well as souls.

The peace that Christ brings is never abstract. It is lived out in how we treat one another, how we worship, how we spend and how we care. As the Church year moves towards Advent, a season of watchful hope, we are invited to widen our view and include all of creation in that circle of care. This is not political – it is biblical. It is not new – it is ancient. And it is not optional – it is gospel work.

Let this month be a time of reconnection – with the earth, with one another, and with the quiet joy of living gently. May we find peace not only in our hearts, but also in our habits. And may we remember that even now, creation waits with hope for the children of God to live as if all life were holy.

The Sandra Steele Auckland Mothers' Union Banner

Katherine McIntyre

The Banner was made by Sandra, a parishioner of St Chads, Meadowbank Anglican Parish, and wife of David, a Priest of the Diocese, in 1989. It was commissioned by the Auckland M.U. to be carried in procession by New Zealand M.U. representatives in Derby Cathedral at a M.U. International gathering. Sandra was an accomplished quilter, embroiderer and needleworker creating stoles for Clergy friends and a set of altar frontals for St Chads Parish in Meadowbank, and a number of banners.

The design of the Banner is traditional, depicted are the mother's union symbol and logo, the words “Diocese of Auckland”, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, with the Christ-Child, Jesus. The words “New Zealand” are embroidered across the bottom, useful when the banner was taken, as it often was, overseas.

The background is an authentic English “Canterbury” brocade, as is used for stoles and chasubles. The haloes are faced with 16 carat gold faced embroidered with calf applique leather, as is the large cross. Mary's features as they are depicted, are often commented on. Rather than

downwards facing in a contemplative pose, she is outward facing, signifying connection with the viewer, as the mother for all mothers.

The Banner was blessed and dedicated by the Rt Rev'd Godfrey Wilson before it was taken to the UK, and its usual home is in the Marsden Chapel of Holy Trinity Cathedral.

Sandra Kaye Steele 1946-1990

Elegy of the Hidden Flame

In the deep of the silence a whisper is calling,
Through the veil of the shadows a bright flame is falling.
Not by power or wisdom can souls find their healing,
Only love's gentle breath sets the heart into feeling.

O the night that surrounds us with sorrow and longing,
While the soul drifts in darkness, forever belonging.
To a hunger that aches with a secret unknown,
To a grace never spoken but felt in the bone.

From the depths of the darkness the spirit awakens,
Through the tears and the trials the soul is unshaken.
By surrender and falling the walls are undone,
Till the Christ in the heart shines as bright as the sun.

O the wounds of the heart that no eye ever sees,
The silent lament carried on desperate knees.
Yet in stillness a promise of mercy is spoken,
A word without sound and a vow never broken.

No more chains to bind us, no fortress to hold,
But the mystery ancient, the story retold.
Of a love that's unending beyond time and measure,
Saving all who seek it, the soul's deepest treasure.

The saints walk the pathway, their footsteps still glowing,
Among them St Thomas, whose doubt kept on growing.
Till the touch of the Risen made faith a clear flame,
A beacon for seekers who call on His name.

In the stillness of knowing where nothing is spoken,
The veil parts in silence and soul's chains are broken.
And salvation is found not in asking or earning,
But in falling forever, forever returning.

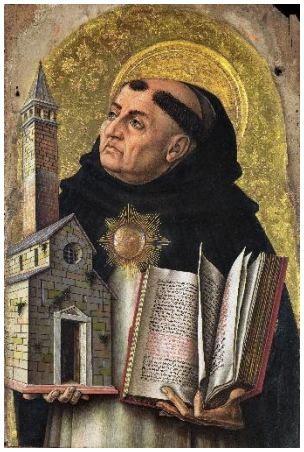
O the path that is narrow, and lonely, and steep,
Where the heart learns to trust what the spirit will keep.
In the shadow of death and the silence of night,
Burns the quiet, bright spark of eternal light.

So we grieve for the fallen, the lost and the broken,
For the words never uttered, the prayers left unspoken.
Yet we rise in the darkness where mercy is given,
And the soul finds its home in the love that is Heaven.

The Metaphysical Argument for God's Existence

Noel Cox

When we think about the existence of God, many of us turn first to our personal experiences of prayer, worship, or the beauty of the world around us. But throughout history, Christian thinkers have also used reason and philosophy to reflect on the mystery of God.



St Thomas Aquinas

One of the most famous of these reflections is found in the work of St Thomas Aquinas, a great Christian teacher of the Middle Ages. He offered several "ways" of thinking about why God must exist, and one of the most thought-provoking is called the *Third Way*.

Aquinas looked at the world and saw that many things – like trees, stars, and even ourselves – are what philosophers call *contingent*. They exist now, but they might not have existed. They rely on causes and conditions outside themselves, and they come and go.

He then asked: if everything were contingent, depending on something else, wouldn't there have been a time when nothing at all existed? And

if there was once nothing, how could there ever be something now? For something cannot come from nothing.

Since we know that things do exist, Aquinas reasoned that there must be at least one being that is not contingent but *necessary* – something that exists by its very nature and cannot not exist. This necessary being is the source of everything else, and this, Aquinas said, is what Christians call God.

This way of thinking might sound a little abstract, but it speaks to a very real truth: our lives and our world are not accidents. We are here because God, the necessary being, holds all things in existence. Our lives have meaning because they are grounded in the One who cannot fail to exist.

God the Father, by Cima da Conegliano, c. 1510–1517

For us as Christians, this is not just a philosophical puzzle. It is a reminder that every breath we take, every moment we live, depends on God's sustaining love. When doubts and uncertainties creep in, we can take comfort in knowing that our faith rests on a firm foundation.

Aquinas's Third Way helps us see that belief in God is not blind. It is reasonable, thoughtful, and deeply connected to the way things are. But more than that, it points us to hope – the assurance that beneath the changes and fragility of life stands the unchanging God who made us, sustains us, and loves us.

While Aquinas's Third Way remains one of the most influential metaphysical arguments for God's existence, it has not gone without criticism. Some philosophers question the assumption that an infinite chain of contingent causes is impossible, while others dispute whether a necessary being must be personal or identical with the God of Christian faith. Yet even with such challenges, the argument continues to prompt serious reflection on why there is something rather than nothing, and invites us to look beyond the shifting realm of contingent things to the ultimate source of all being – the God "in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

The Sacred Meaning of the Coronation

Noel Cox

The coronation of a British monarch is far more than a glittering state occasion. At its heart lies a deeply Christian ritual, one that has evolved over many centuries but remains rooted in the belief that kings and queens are called to serve under God. Even in a society that is more religiously diverse and often more secular than in past generations, the ceremony speaks of continuity, history, and sacred duty.

From the earliest recorded coronation in Britain – when St Columba crowned Áedán mac Gabráin in the sixth century – the rite has always been religious. The medieval and later ceremonies drew on biblical patterns, such as the anointing of King David, and wove them together with Christian liturgy. The king or queen is set apart, not as a priest, but as one entrusted with a sacred responsibility. The Church blesses, anoints, and prays for the sovereign, affirming that their power is to be exercised in service to God and people.

Over the centuries, even great changes such as the Reformation did not sweep away this sacred core. The monarch's anointing, prayers, and oath became a visible reminder that leadership is a trust, not a prize. Shakespeare captured this sense when he wrote, "Not all the water in the rough rude sea can wash the balm off from an anointed king." To this day, the oil of anointing is consecrated, and the sovereign is prayed over, often behind a screen, to underline the solemnity of the act.

Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III, and the Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, The Most Reverend Hosam Naoum, with the consecrated holy oil for the coronation of King Charles III in 2023

The 2023 coronation of King Charles III continued this tradition, yet showed it could adapt. The holy oil was blessed in Jerusalem, and language and symbolism were updated for a modern audience. Other Christian leaders and those of other faiths were present, but the rite remained unapologetically centred on Christian worship. At its heart was the King's pledge to serve – "not to be served but to serve" – echoing the example of Christ himself.

Why does this matter today? Because even when fewer people attend church, the coronation reminds us that public authority is accountable to higher values. It points to the need for humility, service, and unity in national life. Whatever one's beliefs, the ceremony offers a moment to reflect on leadership as a calling, and on the hope that those who govern will do so with wisdom and integrity.

The British coronation, in other words, is not just pageantry. It is a prayerful setting-apart, binding the sovereign to God and people, and reminding the nation that power is best exercised in service. This is why, even now, its Christian heart endures.

Canterbury, Disagreement, and the Anglican Way

Noel Cox

The announcement that the Bishop of London, the Rt Rev'd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally will be the next Archbishop of Canterbury has prompted lively debate across the Anglican world, and wider. Some voices, particularly from within the Gafcon movement (a global movement of Anglicans formed to uphold traditional, biblical teaching within the Communion), have expressed concern that the new Archbishop's theology is too liberal and that her appointment signals a further departure from what they understand to be faithful Anglican teaching. Others, while welcoming her leadership, acknowledge that her appointment will not be without controversy.

It is important to recognise the seriousness of these conversations – but it is equally important not to overstate them. The question before us is not whether we agree with every decision made in the Church of England (for the Archbishop leads that province of the world-wide Anglican Communion, but has no jurisdiction over other provinces), but how Anglicans respond when we do not.

Dame Sarah Mullallay, Bishop of London

The Archbishop of Canterbury is often seen as the "face" of the Anglican Communion, but it is worth remembering that this office does not carry the authority of a pope. The Archbishop is described as *primus inter pares* – first among equals – and serves as a focus of unity rather than a source of doctrinal certainty. Our shared life as Anglicans does not rest on the views or personal qualities of one individual, but on the common faith expressed in Scripture, the creeds, the sacraments, and the historic episcopate. We remain in communion because we share those foundations, not because we agree with every view held at Lambeth Palace.

Anglican theology offers a further reassurance. Article XXVI of the Thirty-Nine Articles teaches that the sacraments are effective not because of the personal holiness or theological perfection of the minister, but because of God's promise and action. Grace is not thwarted by human frailty. This principle – sometimes expressed by the Latin phrase *ex opere operato*, meaning "from the work performed" – reminds us that God continues to work through the Church even when its leaders fall short or when we question their decisions.

In other words, even if some disagree profoundly with Archbishop Mullally's theological outlook, that does not mean the Church's sacramental life is impaired, nor does it call into question the continuing reality of our shared faith.

It is also worth observing that Gafcon itself is far from united on some of the issues now being raised. Several provinces within Gafcon, including Kenya, South Sudan, and Rwanda, consecrate women as bishops. Others do not. This diversity has not been seen as a barrier to shared mission and fellowship. The current unease is therefore less about Archbishop Mullally's being a woman and more about her theological stance. Yet if Gafcon can contain significant differences on questions of ministry and order, it seems inconsistent to suggest that disagreement with Canterbury's outlook must place relationships under strain.

Anglicanism has always been a tradition broad enough to hold together people with different emphases and theological perspectives. Its genius lies in providing space for conscientious disagreement while preserving a shared life of worship, sacrament, and mission. When the Church of England made provision for the ordination of women, it also created structures – such as alternative episcopal oversight and the Five Guiding Principles – to enable those who could not in conscience accept the change to remain fully within the Church's life. That pattern shows that disagreement need not mean division.

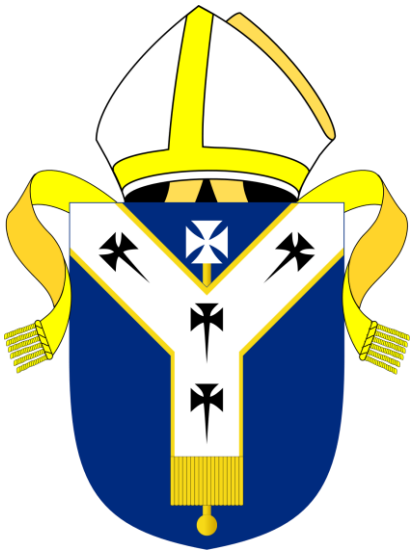
The same approach applies to today's debates. Many Anglicans will continue to disagree strongly on matters of doctrine, morality, and ecclesial order. But the solution is not to walk away from one another. Instead, we are called to continue in fellowship, to pray for one another, and to engage in patient, truthful conversation. Separation should never be our first instinct when difficulties arise.

The Anglican Communion has faced controversy before. Archbishops have held views that many within the Church questioned. Disputes over theology, authority, and practice have arisen in every generation. Yet the Church has endured, precisely because it has chosen to work through its disagreements rather than allow them to tear the fabric of fellowship apart. If theological differences alone were enough to end our common life, the Communion would have fractured long ago.

Lambeth Palace

It is also worth noting that our core identity as Anglicans has never depended on total agreement. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral – a historic statement of Anglican essentials – lists Scripture, the creeds, the two dominical sacraments, and the historic episcopate as the foundation of our shared life. Agreement with the Archbishop's personal theology is not among them.

None of this is to say that concerns about theological drift in the Church of England are unfounded. The debates over sexuality, doctrine, and moral teaching are serious and deserve careful attention. Nor is it to dismiss the real frustrations felt by those who believe that Canterbury no longer reflects their understanding of biblical faithfulness. But stepping back from relationship or treating Canterbury as the problem risks misunderstanding where our unity truly lies.



The arms of the See of Canterbury

Arguably the wiser and more characteristically Anglican response is to stay engaged: to contend for truth with grace and patience, to pray for those with whom we disagree, and to trust that God's purposes are not thwarted by human frailty. It is through such faithful perseverance that reform, renewal, and deeper understanding have always come in the life of the Church.

We may or may not agree with the appointment of Sarah Mullally as Archbishop of Canterbury. We may feel anxious about the direction of the Church of England or frustrated by decisions made far from our shores. Yet none of this need sever the bonds that unite Anglicans worldwide. Our unity is found not in ideological uniformity but in shared faith, shared sacraments, and shared mission. The Anglican way is not to retreat when disagreements arise, but to walk together – even when the road is uneven – trusting that Christ is present with his Church still.

A Gift that Lasts

Many of us have found St Thomas, Tāmaki, to be a place of worship, fellowship, and encouragement in faith. The ministry of our parish today is made possible through the generosity of those who have gone before us, and it is sustained by the gifts of the present generation.

One way of ensuring that future generations may continue to gather here in prayer and service is by remembering St Thomas in your will. A bequest, whether large or small, is a lasting expression of thanksgiving to God for blessings received, and a practical way of supporting the ongoing life and mission of this parish.

We encourage you to consider whether leaving such a gift might be right for you. If you would like to discuss this in confidence, or to receive guidance on how to make provision for a bequest, please feel free to contact the Vicar.

Your prayerful support in all its forms is deeply valued.

Advent and Christmas services

Friday 19th December, 2025
7:00pm Nine Lessons and Carols, with the St Thomas Choir

Sunday 21st December, 2025
9am Eucharist for 4th Sunday in Advent

Wednesday 24th December, 2025
11:30pm Christmas Eve,
Midnight Eucharist

Thursday 25th December, 2025
9:00am Christmas Day, Eucharist

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