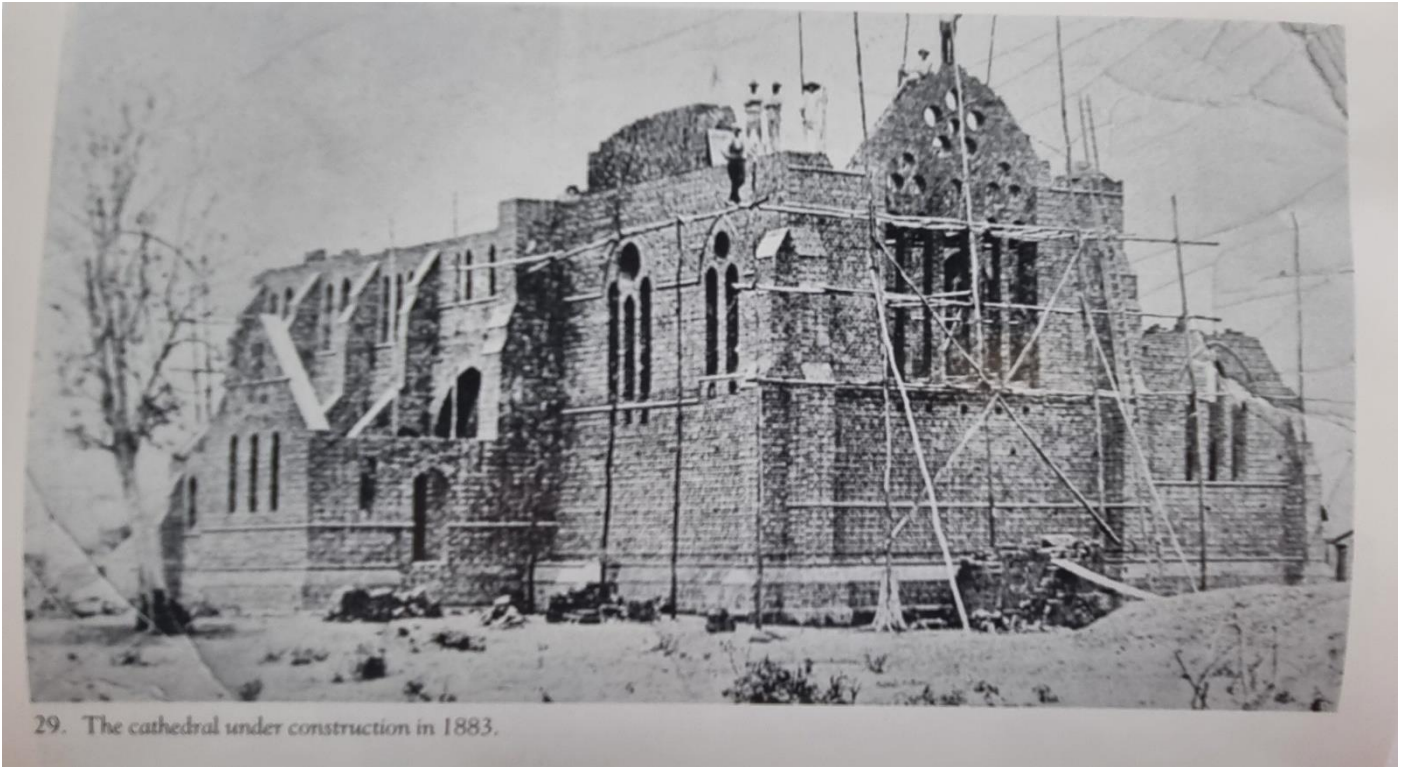


Sunday 21 July 2024 Feast of St James
140th Anniversary of Grafton Cathedral
Dr Murray Harvey, Bishop of Grafton



Humankind was never so happily inspired as when it made a cathedral.

This are the words of the then Archbishop of Sydney, in 1937, quoting from Robert Louis Stevenson, when the Archbishop spoke at the dedication of the completed Christ Church cathedral.

Humankind was never so happily inspired as when it made a cathedral.

Maybe it still applies today, although in relation to the modern “cathedrals” of our day - places like sports stadiums (MCG 100K capacity), shopping malls, or skyscrapers (like Australia 108 in Melb, 100 stories high).

Yet there was worldwide horror when Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris was burnt down in 2019, and there is huge interest and financial support from around the world for its rebuilding. Perhaps not a great surprise, given that before the fire it was being visited by about 12M people a year.

Appreciation of English Cathedrals is also considerable, with visits to them increasing by 197% between 2019 (2.9M) and 2022 (when there were 5.7M visitors).

These are all signs that religious spaces still speak in a special way to the human spirit in a way that few other human made structures do.

So while we think that Archbishop Mowll might have been exaggerating in 1937 when he said that *Humankind was never so happily inspired as when it made a cathedral*, maybe he was right.

Today we celebrate God's providence here for 140 years since the opening and dedication of this cathedral in 1884.

We're also mindful of the other stepping stones along the way, such as the dedication of the completed cathedral in 1937, and its consecration in 1959.

Quote from historical documents.

Looking back, whether it's back to the opening in 1884 or the consecration 65 years ago, can be a cause of celebration, which it should be, and that's why we're here today to give thanks to God. But looking back is also a burden. We're reminded that we're part of a wider ongoing story on the North Coast that has highs and lows.

It's a story of lives transformed and given to Christ, hardships like flood, bushfire and pandemic faced and overcome, of vibrant Christian communities contributing to wider civic life, of schools providing excellence in education, of loving service, of social justice through Anglicare and parishes.

But sadly it's also a story of segregation and dispossession, of being complicit with violence and forced removal, and sadly, on the wider North Coast, of child sexual abuse.

A rich and diverse story, with much to celebrate but also, much to lament.

Today our Gospel reading comes from Matthew Chapter 20 where we hear about James and John, sons of Zebedee, and their mother, in conversation with Jesus. We should not seek positions of power and honour, but rather to drink his cup. In other words, to give ourselves for others, to be the servant of others, not their masters.

Like Jesus, we should come, not wanting to be served, but to serve. Thankfully, the Grafton Cathedral community has a long history of loving service to the local community.

This is a living out of our mission here on the North Coast, and indeed in the whole Anglican Communion, *To respond to human need by loving service* – number three in the Five Marks of Mission.

But let's look forward too.

Psalm 126 appointed for this morning helps us to look forward. It's an incredibly positive and hopeful Psalm. Christian poet and writer Ian Adams calls it a psalm for dreamers. We used the Common Worship (CofE) version today.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.

Here, those who were in exile live in hopeful anticipation of restoration. This dream evokes joy for them, and the psalm sings of their joy.

It's a psalm of astonishing hope arising from deep despair. A declaration of intent, an intent to dream and hope, by those who face adversity.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream.

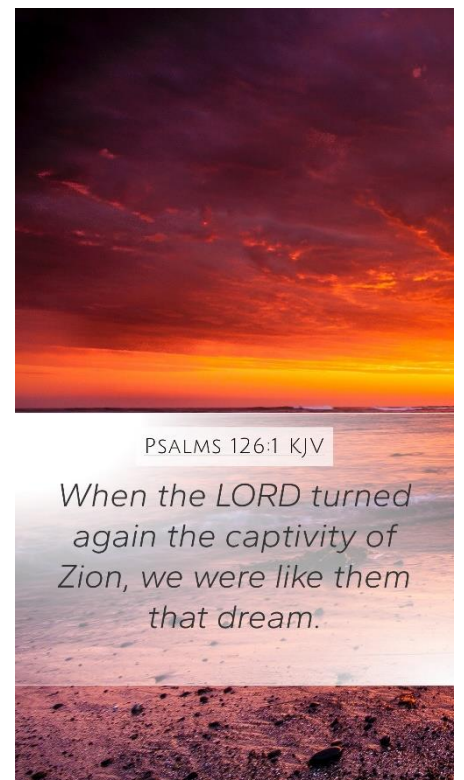
It's a reimagining of world view and perspective.

How can we see the world differently, through God's eyes? With the eyes of hope. With the eyes of hope that the Grafton community must have had when they planned the building of this great cathedral and saw it rise out of the scrub. They dreamed a dream.

Let's make a declaration of intent today to be a people who dream dreams.

As we face the next 140 years, what are we/you dreaming of?

As one who dreams dreams, and as a person of hope, give your life to him again this day. If this place has been a special place for you, or for those who have gone before you, or even if this is your very first visit, give your heart to him today and



serve him. Serve with God's people in this place as they serve God through this community.

And be present for others, like the one who came, not to be served, but to serve.

God of our forebears, who of old didst move thy servants in this place to build an house of prayer for the offering of eternal praises to thy glorious majesty: Grant to us, and to all who herein call upon thy holy name from age to age, that, by the offering of our lives and the praises of our lips, we may ever seek the increase of thy glory and thy kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer from Winchester Cathedral

Psalm 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, ♦
then were we like those who dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter ♦
and our tongue with songs of joy.

3 Then said they among the nations, ♦
'The Lord has done great things for them.'

4 The Lord has indeed done great things for us, ♦
and therefore we rejoiced.

5 Restore again our fortunes, O Lord, ♦
as the river beds of the desert.

6 Those who sow in tears ♦
shall reap with songs of joy.

7 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed, ♦
will come back with shouts of joy,
bearing their sheaves with them.

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Opening of the New Cathedral at Grafton.

GRAFTON JULY 25.

The new cathedral church in Grafton was opened this forenoon, there being a very large congregation present, filling the building in every part. The number, which was estimated at 500, included representatives of all parts of the surrounding parishes, and all the members of the synod at present holding its sittings here. The procession to the new church was headed by members of the local lodge of Freemasons and visiting brethren in regalia, numbering about 50, after whom came the lay representatives of the synod, and then the clergy of the diocese in their robes of office, together with the Bishop of the diocese, Dr. Turner, and Dr. Barry, Primate of Australia, each having his pastoral staff borne before him. In the nave of the church the Bishop of Grafton and Armidale was met by the churchwardens, who presented a petition to have the church licensed, their request being acceded to in the usual form. The service of morning prayer was then carried out, a number of the visiting clergymen taking part. The sermon was preached by Dr. Barry, who took as his text, Isaiah, liv., and the last clause of the second verse—“Lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes.” The Primate gave a very eloquent discourse, which was listened to with the deepest attention. Holy communion was administered subsequently to those who remained. The offertory amounted to about £100. A service was conducted in the new church again this evening, when the building was thronged. The Bishop of Sydney again preached. The acoustic properties of the new church seem all that can be desired, and its proportion and general design evoke the highest commendations from all who have seen it for the first time. Part of the furniture and fittings are merely placed in temporarily to enable the opening to be carried out. A luncheon was given to Dr. Barry at the Theatre Royal this afternoon, at which the Bishop of Grafton and Armidale presided. About 60 or 70 ladies and gentlemen were present. After the health of the Queen had been honoured, Dr. Turner proposed the health of the Primate, thanking him for his kindness in coming to the district on the occasion of the opening of their new church. Dr. Barry, in replying, expressed the pleasure his visit had afforded him. The health of Dr. Turner was proposed by the Hon. E. D. Ogilvie, M.L.C., who stated that the day was the 70th anniversary of his birthday, and announced that as he had already provided one-tenth of the cost of the building, originally estimated at £3000, but which was to cost, as now understood, £5000, he should increase his contribution. He also gave £100 to the Grafton Hospital. Dr. Turner made a suitable reply. Bishop Barry proposed “Prosperity to Grafton and District,” which was responded to by the Mayor of Grafton. A number of other toasts were given, the meeting lasting until 4.30 o'clock. Dr. Barry leaves by the City of Grafton to-morrow morning.