

## Anglican Board of Mission 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner

Brisbane – 26 September 2025

*Address given by the Most Reverend Jeremy Greaves*

Today we gather to give thanks for 175 years of the Anglican Board of Mission. 175 years is a remarkable span of time, and it represents countless lives touched, communities transformed, and partnerships forged across the world.

From its beginnings in 1850, ABM has been a sign of the Church's outward-looking spirit. It began not in wealth or power but in generosity and vision. The very first appeal was not for buildings or institutions here at home, but for a ship—the mission vessel *The Southern Cross*—to carry the gospel and the presence of the Church to the islands of Melanesia. That first fundraising effort reminds us that the Church has always been at its best when it looks beyond itself. The *Southern Cross* was more than a ship: it was a symbol of faith that dares to take risks, to cross boundaries, to sail into unknown waters, trusting that God's Spirit was already at work.

From those early days, ABM has always embodied that conviction: that mission is not something we do to others, but something we share with others. The Board's work has never been simply about charity, but about relationship—mutual giving and receiving, being alongside sisters and brothers in their struggles and in their hopes.

Of course, there have been many challenges along the way. My grandfather, Bishop Walter Baddeley, the seventh missionary bishop of Melanesia, once put it like this:

*"So often it is true of our own lives... suddenly all our hopes and plans are shattered: we see tumbling down all about us what we have been building up, and we have to begin again. Very true it is of the work of the church. At times throughout her history she has all but fallen. But she has arisen with new power... [There are always] temporary setbacks: but there is always, if we but ask for it, that power, which enables us to be up again and going forward... So don't let us be despondent. We must rise above that. The Mission has had many very heavy blows in times past, but the Church of Melanesia goes on. We must face disappointments and discouragements with that Christian optimism, which recognises no defeat. And the work must go on."*

Those words, spoken in the midst of the Second World War, were forged in hard experience. Bishop Baddeley knew that mission is never a smooth path. Yet he also knew that the Church, sustained by the Spirit, always rises again with new power. That's as true of ABM's journey as it is of the Church in Melanesia.

Think of the setbacks: the loss of missionaries at sea, the destruction of mission stations in times of conflict, the uncertainty of changing political and cultural contexts. At every stage, there have been moments when it seemed as though the work might falter. And yet, again and again, the mission has gone on. ABM has re-imagined itself, found new partners, and discovered new ways of serving.

At my grandfather's consecration in St Mary's Cathedral in Auckland, Archdeacon Cullwick preached these words:

*"We know how the Church's history bears witness to the fact that when not only the Church's ministers are faithful, but when the Church's members are faithful, when the church [as a whole family] is faithful, God's cause prevails."*

That has been ABM's story for 175 years: faithful ministers, faithful members, a faithful whole Church. When clergy and laity, supporters and missionaries, parishes and dioceses have stood together, God's cause has indeed prevailed.

And how has that faithfulness taken shape? Let me name just a few milestones:

- **Melanesia and New Guinea:** ABM's early identity was bound to these islands. The sacrifices of early missionaries like John Coleridge Patteson—martyred in 1871—shaped ABM's DNA, reminding the Church that mission can demand the ultimate price. Later, in New Guinea, the "Martyrs of 1942" gave similar witness during the war years. Their courage continues to inspire.
- **Indigenous Ministry in Australia:** As early as 1910, ABM was working among Aboriginal communities, establishing schools and mission centres in places like Roper River in the Northern Territory. Today, that legacy has grown into strong partnerships with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council (NATSIA), supporting First Nations leadership and self-determination within the Church.
- **Expanding Partnerships:** In the 20th century, ABM extended its reach to Asia and the Pacific. Relationships with the Church of the Province of Myanmar, the Episcopal Church in the Philippines, and many others have become models of mutual mission—where Australians learn as much as we give.
- **Development and Justice:** In recent decades, ABM's work has embraced community development and advocacy. Through Anglican in Development (A.I.D), programs have supported clean water, education, disaster relief, and food security. ABM has also been at the forefront of climate change advocacy in the Pacific, recognising that care for creation is central to the gospel.

The focus of mission has expanded. Where once it was about sending clergy and teachers, today it is about supporting sustainable development, health care, reconciliation, peace-building, and advocacy for justice. In every era, ABM has held to that simple truth: the Church does not exist for itself, but for the sake of the world God loves.

And yet the heart of it all remains the same. At its centre is the conviction that God's mission is bigger than us, and that our role is to join in where God's Spirit is already at work. As Bishop Baddeley said:

*"The Church does not exist for itself. It exists for the world—its strength and resources must be given away, if they are to have meaning."*

That spirit of giving—giving away what we have, giving ourselves in service—is what raised the funds for the *Southern Cross*. It is what sustained missionaries through hardship. It is what inspires ABM today to stand with the poor, the marginalised, and the forgotten.

And so, friends, as we celebrate this 175th anniversary, let us not think of it as looking back on a story completed. Instead, let us hear it as a call to launch out once more into deep waters. The world still longs for healing, justice, and reconciliation. The seas of mission still stretch before us. And once again, we are called to build "ships"—perhaps not of timber and sail, but of education, advocacy, and partnership—so that the love of Christ may cross every boundary.

As we mark this anniversary, may we take courage from the past, draw strength from the faithfulness of those who have gone before us, and recommit ourselves to that same Christian optimism that "recognises no defeat." With God's help, and as a faithful whole Church, the work must—and will—go on.