

Diocesan staff farewell two beloved colleagues

Diocesan staff had a chance to say a personal goodbye to two close colleagues at a lunch recently â?? Bishop Denise Ferguson and In-House Legal Counsel Helen Clarke.

Synod Secretary Joe Thorp paid tribute to Helen, explaining why she would be such a tough act to follow.



Synod Secretary and Registrar Joe Thorp at the farewell lunch for the Diocesan office of Bishop Denise Ferguson and Helen Clark

â??I can only imagine how delighted Keith Stevens, Diocesan Secretary at the time that Helen joined, must have been to have received Helenâ??s application for the position of governance and ministry support officer in 2014,â?• he said.

â??A CV which read Bachelor of Law honours from Kingâ??s College University of London, Master of Arts in Theological Research from the University of Durham, called to the bar of Supreme Court in South Australia, a staff solicitor in two of Adelaideâ??s leading commercial law firms and legal officer for the Attorney Generalâ??s department and in the Crown Solicitors office, in-house counsel â?¦ legal counsel at Catholic Education SA, supervising solicitor of Flinders Universityâ??s legal advice committee. And hereâ??s the kicker, member of parish council in at least three parishes, Synod representative. And she still wanted to work for us.â?•

Joe said Helen had always been collegiate, supportive and fun.

â??Youâ??ll be terribly missed,â?• he said. â??We give thanks to God for your service and wish you health and good fortune for a long and happy retirement.â?•

Helen thanks the staff for the support they had given her over the years, particularly when she was seriously ill.

â??I say thank you for the prayers that you offered and for the practical support that came from sometimes very unexpected quarters.

â??And thank you too for being such a good bunch of friends and colleagues, for your assistance, for your patience, for your persistence, for your understanding, and for your affirmation.â?•

It was also an opportunity for the Diocesan staff to say farewell and thanks to Bishop Denise Ferguson.

The Revâ??d Canon Dr Joan Riley, principal of St Barnabas College, paid tribute to Bishop Deniseâ??s mentoring and pastoral ways.

â??She has been gracious as the chair of Barbaras college council,â?• she said. â??Denise has led ably particularly through the long processes of accreditation with the University of Divinity. Sheâ??s enabled me to fully exercise my leadership as principal of the college. She has not shut down my vision or held back my energy. Sheâ??s had confidence in me and has shared the journey to get to where we are now.

â??Thank you for being among us and gifting us with so many things. We will miss you, but you have strengthened us.â?•

Joan also acknowledged Bishop Deniseâ??s role as a trailblazer.

â??The first bishop who is a woman in Adelaide, one who has broken down barriers in the faces which are faithful to the church, but open to whomever God sends.â?•

Archbishop Geoff Smith thanked Bishop Denise for moving from Brisbane to take up the position of Bishop.

â??I clearly remember your readiness to make a big move, a significant away from family to be open and ready to follow the leading of God in your life and for this diocese. So Iâ??m really grateful to you and Mark for being prepared to be open to what tipped your world upside down,â?• he said.

â??I also was really looking for an assistant bishop who would contribute pastoral to, if you like, balance up my sometimes task-oriented approach. And Denise, youâ??ve done a fantastic job at that. Youâ??ve got beside people, youâ??ve cared for people, youâ??ve encouraged people.â?•

In response, Bishop Denise looked to the future for the Diocese.

â??God is faithful and you are going to be here in another 175 years. What this diocese is going to look like, who knows? But we have something bigger than us steering us in the right direction as long as we stay open to that. So thank you. I thank God for the opportunity. But I also thank all of you for every single part that you play.â?•

You can read about the Thanksgiving Eucharist for Bishop Denise here.

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