Bishop Chris McLeod lays up his staff as National Aboriginal Bishop.

Bishop Chris McLeod laid up his staff as National Aboriginal Bishop at St Peterâ??s Cathedral on Saturday 5 September, closing 11 years in a role he carried alongside his ministry as Dean of the Cathedral and assistant bishop in the Diocese of Adelaide.

The same service marked a second occasion: the arrival of a gift from Canterbury, made for Australiaâ??s First Peoples.

The Anglican Indigenous Network was meeting in Adelaide from 4 to 7 September â?? its first in-person gathering since 2019 â?? drawing representatives from Aotearoa New Zealand, Canada, the United States, Hawaiâ??i and the Torres Strait, alongside members of NATSIAC, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council.

Dr Ric Thorpe, Archbishop of Melbourne, far right leads the procession into St Peterâ??s Cathedral ahead of the Primate, Dr Mark Short.

In his sermon, the Primate, the Right Revâ??d Dr Mark Short, took as his theme how easily true greatness goes unrecognised. He spoke, too, of Father Patrick Brisbane â?? ordained in 1970 as the first Aboriginal priest in the Anglican Church of Australia â?? and of how long the Church took to recognise what God was doing in Aboriginal Christians.

â??Central to Bishop Chrisâ??s ministry has been drawing the attention of the wider church to what God is doing through the life and witness of First Nations people,â?• Bishop Short said. He credited Bishop Chrisâ??s advocacy for General Synodâ??s decision last month to fund a full-time national Aboriginal ministry and a full-time national Torres Strait Islander ministry.

He also noted how the outgoing bishop had spent his final days in the job: not writing memoirs or leaving notes for a successor, but â??driving the bus,â?• making sure everyone got safely from one place to the next.

The Most Revâ??d Dr Ric Thorpe, Archbishop of Melbourne, then presented the Stolen Generation Cope on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Sarah Mullally. The Primate blessed it.

The vestment was commissioned by Archbishop Justin Welby during his 2022 visit to Australia and took more than two years to make.

Printed on fine silk by British artist Terry Duffy with photographer Mark Howard, it carries Pemulwuy and Oodgeroo Noonuccal, both flags, scarred trees and songlines, ancient rock art, and the war service

of Privates Harold West and George Leonard.

Bishop Chris McLeod in the reconciliation cope

Three words are inscribed on it â?? Reconciliation, Justice, Truth â?? and around its edge runs the question: â??Whatever happened to love one another?â?•

It was shaped through the counsel of Bishop Chris, Pastor Ray Minniecon, Canon Glenn Loughrey, Aunty Dianne Langham, Aunty Rose Elu and NATSIAC members.

In the message read by Archbishop Thorpe, Dame Sarah did not soften the history the garment carries.

The stories gathered into it, she said, were â??stories of violence, dispossession, the removal of children, forced assimilation and the destruction of your culture. To our shame, the Church was implicated in parts of this terrible historyâ?•.

â??Their consequences continue to be felt across generations, in families and communities, and in enduring experiences of inequality, intergenerational trauma and injustice.â?•

Her hope was that the cope would be â??a visible, sacred act of truth-telling, and that from this true justice, and true acts of reconciliation may flowâ?• â?? with a condition attached. â??This gift, this gesture, will, of course, only be meaningful if it is matched by action.â?•

The words land close to home for Bishop Chris, who is of Gurindji descent and whose mother and grandmother were members of the Stolen Generations.

He holds the cope in trust for those who follow him nationally â?? a succession NATSIAC will now discern, with the position funded as a full-time appointment for the first time.

Bishop Chris continues as Dean of St Peterâ??s Cathedral.

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