

May 2026

*“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-4*

Dear Archbishops,

We are writing in response to your recent Easter Message, ‘Let Love Lead.’ While we recognise that a pastoral letter cannot encompass every aspect of Easter, we would have welcomed a fuller and more explicit emphasis on the death and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. We believe Easter provides a unique opportunity to proclaim boldly the life-changing good news at the heart of the Christian faith.

Such proclamation accords with the first Mark of Mission, which provides the theological basis and foundation for the other four Marks, including the fourth, which calls for the transformation of the unjust structures of society.<sup>1</sup> There are three particular matters arising from your Easter Message which we wish to address.

First, we are concerned by the exclusive reference to Jesus as “the teacher.” While Jesus indeed taught with authority and was recognised as a teacher by his followers, it is precisely because Jesus was not just a teacher that humanity can have an present and eternal hope. The events of Easter call us to proclaim him as Lord and Saviour, as God among us. It is God in Christ who commands us to love one another, who dies for our sins, and who rises to life to secure our salvation. As Christians, our obedience to Christ’s command to love is rooted not merely in the fact that “his proposition [as “the teacher”] was radical, and revolutionary, and dangerous,” but fundamentally because of who he is and what he has accomplished in his death and resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

Second, we are troubled by the hermeneutic used in your discussion of the new commandment (John 13:34-35). While we agree with you that Jesus demonstrates what it means to stand “with the suffering, the marginalised, and the oppressed, liberating them from injustice, and setting them free” (in line with what he declares in Luke 4:14-21 and the fourth Mark of Mission), the oppressor-oppressed hermeneutic underpinning your letter obscures the fullness of what Christ set about to accomplish. This framework leaves readers believing that privilege and power were the enemies which Jesus Christ sought to overcome.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/five-marks-of-mission/>

<sup>2</sup> As our Articles of Religion (II) put it: Christ “suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.” See also Article XXXI.

However, the real enemies we all face are sin and death. Each of us, at times has sinned against others and has been sinned against. Political oppression is one symptom of the deeper disease of sin which is redeemed and healed through Christ's cross and resurrection. Without such redemption and healing we are bound for death and destruction.

Consequently, we all stand in need of forgiveness, rescue, healing, and renewal. We need forgiveness for the ways we have harmed others and rescue from our inclination to do so again. We need healing and renewal from the wounds of being oppressed. The gospel offers this hope: that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, forgiveness, rescue, healing, and renewal are available.

Moreover, the oppressor-oppressed hermeneutic fails to fully account for God's intentional work in Christ. It risks reducing Jesus to a mere passive victim of the privileged, the powerful, or the forces of Empire. While it is true that religious leaders and political authorities orchestrated Jesus Christ's crucifixion on a Roman cross, Scripture also reveals that God was mysteriously at work, fulfilling his redemptive plan. As the Apostle Peter says on the day of Pentecost, "This man [Jesus] was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him." (Acts 2:23-24). Christian theology often holds God's sovereign action alongside human action and responsibility, and this is important when discussing the Easter events.

Lastly, we are concerned that your message does not sufficiently connect a Christian understanding of love to the historic events of Easter. The Apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." This act of love is astonishing, echoing Jesus Christ's own words that "greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). To truly "let love lead," as you urge, it is essential to focus on the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without this foundation, Christ's new commandment risks becoming, as you aptly wrote, "just a lovely sentiment."

We write this letter in the hope that it may encourage continued reflection and dialogue. As our Archbishops and leaders within the Church, we long for the good news of Jesus Christ - crucified, risen, ascended, and reigning - to be proclaimed with clarity, joy, and theological fullness in ways that are faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the doctrine and formularies our Church has received.

In a world longing for hope, we believe the Church must continue to proclaim not only Christ's call to love, but also the saving significance of his death and resurrection, through which forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life are offered to the world.

Yours in Christ,

The Standing Committee of The Anglican Community of St Mark:

*Mrs Penny Field (Dunedin), Rev Claude Fong-Toy (Auckland), Capt Peter Lloyd (Auckland), Rev Fraser McDermott (Auckland), Rev Francis Noordanus (Dunedin), Mrs Amanda Price (Christchurch), Rev Johua Taylor (Christchurch), Mr Chris Ward (Nelson).*