

ANGLICANS TOGETHER INCORPORATED

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT
FOR THE 2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

General

The mission of Anglicans Together is expressed in the Objects of our association, which are:

- *To maintain, foster and develop the life of the Anglican Church in Australia in accordance with the principles of the Anglican Church as stated in the 'Fundamental Declarations' of the Constitution of the Anglican Church in Australia (Clauses 1-3) as interpreted and expounded by the 'Ruling Principles' in Clause 4 of the Constitution.*
- *To confirm our common allegiance to the Anglican Communion as an integral part of the larger body of Christ's Church, called to bear witness to the freedom and reconciliation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*
- *To maintain the comprehensiveness and respect the diversity of belief and practice as it has developed in conformity with the Fundamental Declarations.*
- *To promote unity and co-operation with the Anglican Church in the best interests of the Mission of the Church and the credibility of the Gospel in Australian society.*
- *To foster member involvement and participation in Synod with informed debate, coherent reasoning and constructive criticism.*

This places our interests squarely in the midst of the belief and practice of mainstream Anglicanism, both national and globally. We are Biblical, Creedal, Sacramental, and traditional in our view of the polity of the church. On the other hand, it does not mean that we are only backward-looking nor are we locked into a view of some past 'golden age' when we believe that the church had it all 'right'. The Anglican Church is constantly in the process of reform, just as it also remains within the body of the church catholic. So we value and learn from the past, but also look to the future.

To this we add a more contemporary interest in developing a church that is inclusive, incarnational and intellectually honest in its engagement with society and the exercise of Christ's mission to the world. In this respect, we know that our views do not always sit comfortably with some people in the Diocese of Sydney, but nevertheless we consider it important to remind the Diocese of the broader Anglican Church that exists beyond its walls.

In pursuing these goals, we publish a newsletter several times a year, hold an annual dinner with a guest speaker, facilitate a link-network of parishes, and run occasional seminars on the life of the church in general and of the Diocese of Sydney in particular. We encourage people to join us in this mission, both as members and through participation in our activities.

Election of Archbishop Glenn Davies

Our new Archbishop, The Most Reverend Dr Glenn Davies, was overwhelmingly elected to this position at the Diocesan Electoral Synod in August last year. Anglicans Together has welcomed his appointment and looks forward to working with him in Christ's mission in this Diocese.

In his Presidential Address to the 2013 Synod, Archbishop Davies expressed a desire to see a church that is more engaged with the community, especially in its efforts to present the gospel as an expression of the reality of the love of Christ for all. This is quite a challenge in these current times when the church is so internally divided on the one hand, and an increasing number in the wider society are shifting from apathy to hostility toward the institutional church on the other. We have some big challenges before us and it is a difficult time to be an effective leader in such an organisation. We therefore pray for our Archbishop.

Other Episcopal Activities

During the past year we have seen the election of a new Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia, the Most Reverend Dr Philip Freer, who is also Archbishop of Melbourne. New bishops in the Province of NSW are The Right Reverends Greg Thompson (Newcastle), Dr Sarah Macneil (Grafton - who is also the first female diocesan bishop in Australia) and Rob Gillion (Riverina). The Right Reverend Chris Edwards was also consecrated and commissioned as Bishop of the Northern Region in the Diocese of Sydney and Dr Greg Anderson of Moore College has been elected Bishop of the Northern Territory. Anglicans Together also notes with sadness the death of Bishop John McIntyre of Gippsland, a former priest in this Diocese.

Executive Committee

The role of the Executive Committee is 'to promote the objects of Anglicans Together, and control and manage its activities in accordance with the Constitution'. Four meetings of the Executive Committee were held in the past year. Its membership was as follows:

President:	The Rev'd Andrew Sempell
Vice President:	Susan Hooke
Secretary:	Carolyn Lawes
Treasurer:	Wesley Fairhall
Members Elected:	Lynn Bannerman (Synod Coord) Caroline Bowyer The Rev'd Philip Bradford (Membership Sec)
Member Co-opted:	Moya Holle (Communications Coord)

In addition to the Communications Coordinator, the Committee has created a number of other positions to help it focus on the specific needs of Anglicans Together. These positions can be filled either by elected members of the Committee or by others co-opted for the purpose. The positions are as follows;

1. **Membership Secretary:** to promote Anglicans Together and seek new members,
2. **Synod Coordinator:** to coordinate a review of the Diocesan Synod agenda and its reports and inform members, and
3. **Events Coordinator:** to coordinate the current activities of Anglicans Together and propose new ones.

I thank all the members of the Committee for their hard work and dedication to the work of Anglicans Together in the past year.

Meeting with the Archbishop

Susan Hooke and I met with the Archbishop in April 2014 and raised the following matters;

- The desire to create a positive relationship between the Archbishop and Anglicans Together,
- Concerns about the ethos of the Diocese, including:
 - The experience of exclusivism, tribalism and a growing narrowness,
 - Vindictiveness toward people who disagree with the Diocese's accepted views,
 - A noticeable withdrawal of more moderate people from the governance of the Diocese, and
 - The problem of the priority of legalism and realpolitik over grace,
- The need for changes in Diocesan governance including the provision of greater transparency in its decision-making processes and accountability for the decisions made,
- Concerns about the process of parish appointments, including:
 - A need for greater diversity of liturgical and pastoral practice in the Diocese,
 - A review of the constitution of the Diocesan Appointment Board,
 - The role, powers and accountability of the 'Visa' Committee,
 - The need to open up the range of clergy who can be appointed as assistant clergy,
 - The matter of parish rights and their disenfranchisement because of the appointment process, and
- The role of Moore College and its lack of engagement with and support of traditional parishes in the Diocese.

Annual Dinner

The Annual Dinner was held on Thursday 25th September 2014 at the City Tattersall's Club and the speaker was the Archbishop on the topic of '*Transparency, diversity and Grace – a Vision for a Diocese*'. Around 160 people attended this event and it was considered a great success.

I express my great appreciation to all the Committee members who worked so hard to achieve such a good outcome. I especially mention Susan Hooke, Wesley Fairhall and Caroline Bowyer in this regard.

NSW Ecumenical Council

The NSW Ecumenical Council has expressed its appreciation for the donation of \$5,000 from Anglicans Together made at the last AGM. I delivered an address on the topic of '*A gospel divided: is it too late for Christianity to regain its credibility in Australia*' to the AGM of the Ecumenical Council held on 30 August 2014.

Communications

Newsletter. The Anglicans Together Newsletter is produced three times a year and is now printed in colour. It is our principal line of communication with both members and the leadership of the church. On behalf of us all I express our thanks to Moya Holle for the excellent work she does on this publication.

Website. The website is maintained by Simon Davies with the provision of material by Moya Holle. Some changes were made to it during the year; however, the time is coming when a new format should be considered.

Archives

The Anglicans Together records are now being deposited in the Archive at St James' Church, King Street, Sydney.

Conclusion

We are going to continue to face challenges in the Anglican Church in general and the Diocese of Sydney in particular on into the future. The following areas of concern are identified:

- A growing mono-culture will make the Diocese more vulnerable to social change and diminish its capacity to adapt to new circumstances.
- Increasing disengagement of the church from the life of the broad community in which it is based will bring a loss of good-will from that community and greater alienation of the church from the decision-making processes of government.
- The public scandal of child abuse, failure in child protection, and bullying will continue to erode the church of its moral authority.
- The ongoing fallout from the disastrous loss of Diocesan financial assets in the global financial crisis will continue to place a greater burden on parishes as the Synod tries to claw back funds into its financial reserves. We can only expect the imposition of further levies and charges in this regard.
- The exercise of exclusivism, tribalism, secrecy and arrogance will have the effect of destroying both grace and trust, and must therefore be resisted by all for the sake of a transparent and inclusive church.

So let us be transformed by the Gospel so that through our behaviour people may see the truth of Christ lived out in both word and action, and may we be a blessing to those around us.

The Reverend Andrew Sempell
President, Anglicans Together

5 October 2014