

September 2022

## Presidents Report, Anglicans Together

Greetings in the Name of the Risen and Ascended Lord who has sent the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us! I do hope that you and your loved ones are surviving this time of ongoing COVID-19 life and challenges. It certainly continues to be different.

On a positive note, Sydney Diocesan Synod is back (we hope). Our Archbishop, the Most Reverend Kanishka Raffel, has issued his official Summons to the third session of the 52nd Synod. This session of Synod is scheduled to commence on 10 September and will then continue on 12-14 and 19-20 September 2022.

This therefore means that our much loved Anglicans Together Pre-Synod Meeting will be taking place at 7pm Thursday 8 September at St James Hall, Level 1, 169-171 Phillip Street, Sydney. All Anglicans Together Members and other Lay and Clerical Members of Synod are most welcome to attend.

The first day of the forthcoming Synod (Saturday 10 September) is being referred to as "Synod in the Greenfields". It will commence in the morning at Oran Park Anglican College. Synod members can take a guided bus tour of a number of nearby Greenfield sites and also a "hot lap" (their description) walking tour of New Life Church Oran Park and the Anglicare Village and surrounds. The Archbishop is excited about all this and has even made a video. You can watch it here: <https://greenfields.sydney/>

Following the tours, the Synod Service will take place in the College Auditorium followed by the Archbishop's Presidential Address. Synod will then reconvene and continue at the Wesley Theatre in the city for the remainder of the session. Members of Synod who attended the Election Synod last year will recall that we were advised "not to get used to" the more spacious and modern International Convention Centre at Darling Harbour as this venue is far too expensive!

An examination of some of the forward materials that Synod Members have been provided firstly indicates that there are a number of elections required. These range from appointments to the councils and boards of: several of our Anglican schools; Anglicare; the Superannuation Board; the NSW Council of Churches; Evangelism and New Churches; Ministry Training and Development; Moore College; St Andrew's and St Michael's Cathedral Chapters; the Loans Board; and Anglican Aid.

Synod Book 1 firstly contains the Standing Committee Report to the Synod covering the period from October 2020 to October 2021. There are a suite of Financial Reports. In the Synod Funding Arrangements Report annexure on *Parochial Cost Recoveries, Church Land Acquisitions Levy and Property Receipts Levy for 2022*, it is reported that the Total Net Operating Receipts of the 267 "Parochial Units" in the Diocese for 2020 was \$136,310,641. From this amount, the Diocese then this year recovers \$9,289,661 for Parish Network Costs, \$2,726,213 Church Acquisition Levy to buy land for future church sites, and \$321,773 by way of the Property Receipts Levy.

Interestingly, on the Parish Net Operating Receipts listed for 2020, a parochial unit now has to have net annual operating receipts of over \$2million to make it into the "big boys club". There are five such parochial units listed, none of which would be regarded as "Stole Parishes".

Synod Book 1 also contains a series of other annual reports including the Property Trust and Safe Ministry Board and Professional Standards Unit Report. There is a proposed amendment to this

Diocese's version of the national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and church workers (*Faithfulness in Service*) to extend the prohibition that: "7.4 You are to be chaste and not engage in sex outside of marriage" to include "and not engage in disgraceful conduct of a sexual nature". There is likely to be some debate and possible amendments to this proposed change.

There is also a Report from the Sydney Diocesan Doctrine Committee entitled *The Unchanging Heart of Parochial Incumbency* that warrants more detailed analysis but which seems to conclude that financially supporting full-time parish clergy, particularly Rectors, remains a desirable thing.

As a final aside for Synod tragi-comics, regarding the forthcoming session of Diocesan Synod, if its title as being the "third session of the 52nd Synod" intrigues you, you are not alone.

Given that I initially thought that the 52nd Synod had only one ordinary day session on 3 May 2021, then immediately followed the special Election Synod and then the proposed ordinary (second?) session of Synod for September 2021 then delayed to late February/early March 2022 was cancelled due to COVID-19 complexities, how could we possibly be up to the "third session of the 52nd Synod" and also, how did we somehow lose the title "ordinary"?

So to assist us solve this mystery, I contacted Daniel Glynn, Secretary of the Synod, who has enlightened us with the following:

*"Hi Max, I'm glad there is someone else out there interested in these things! You are right that the first session was 3 May 2021, and we called that the "first ordinary" session. However the second session was the election Synod 4-6 May 2021, which we called the "special session to elect...". We were scheduled to have the "second ordinary" session in September 2021, postponed to February 2022; but cancelled.*

*Because of that cancellation, the session in September 2022 (which was supposed to be the 3rd ordinary session) is technically the second "ordinary" session or the "third session" of the 52nd Synod. We have elections that have been keeping up with the original schedule (we are up to the "3rd ordinary" synod as far as elections go in September 2022), but only up to the second ordinary session as far as meetings go. We didn't want to have elections associated with the 3rd ordinary session occurring with the 2nd ordinary session, so we dropped the "ordinary" and just refer to the September 2022 session as the "third session". I hope that makes sense!" Absolutely Daniel!*

On the national front, the big event which has already taken place this year was the meeting of General Synod. This Eighteenth Session of General Synod was initially scheduled to be held in 2020 but was postponed twice due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was finally held between 8-13 May on the Gold Coast.

General Synod is like a federal legislature of the Anglican Church of Australia. That said, ultimate sovereignty lies with each of the 23 individual dioceses with respect to what occurs in their individual dioceses. General Synod is established under the *Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia* and is ordinarily meant to gather every four years.

One interesting issue concerns the composition of General Synod and who gets to participate and vote. Like our Sydney Diocesan Synod, the General Synod also has three houses – Bishops, Clergy and Laity. These three houses sit together and vote together unless a vote by individual houses is requested by at least five members of the House of Bishops, or ten members of the House of Clergy

or Laity. When voting by houses a motion requires a majority in each of the three houses to be successful.

The House of Bishops comprises the Diocesan Bishops and an Indigenous Bishop. The number of members of the Houses of Clergy and Laity from each diocese is determined in proportion to the number of clergy resident in that diocese. So size does indeed matter and it is at this point when you realise how relatively larger the Diocese of Sydney is than every other Diocese in the Australian Church.

In addition to the Archbishop, Sydney has a whopping 72 members of General Synod (36 Clergy, 36 Lay). The nearest is the Diocese of Melbourne which has 36 members (half that of Sydney), then Brisbane with 20 members and Perth with 16 members. Adelaide only has 8 members. Concerning the other dioceses in our Province of New South Wales, in addition to their Diocesan Bishop, Canberra and Goulburn has 12 members, Newcastle has 8 members, Armidale has 4 members and both Bathurst and Riverina have only 2 members each (one clerical, one lay).

What all this means is the Diocese of Sydney has significant numerical voting power within the Houses of Clergy and Laity in the current General Synod. This is also amplified by two factors. First, as members of our Diocesan Synod are aware, the Clerical and Lay General Synod members who represent this Diocese are of a generally uniform conservative evangelical persuasion and would thus be expected to block vote “the party line” on any contested and contentious issues. Second, there are other dioceses who have representatives who are similarly conservative evangelicals or at least moderately evangelical who will/may vote with the Sydney block. All of this makes it challenging for alternate voices at General Synod.

This situation was revealed, for example, in the General Synod election results. At each ordinary General Synod session, elections are held for important General Synod bodies and committees. Concerning the powerful Standing Committee of General Synod, none of the nine Members of the House of Clergy elected by the House of Clergy are from the more moderate/progressive faction of the church and two are clergy of the Diocese of Sydney. Of the nine members of the House of Laity elected by the House of Laity to Standing Committee, three are from the Diocese of Sydney, one is from a diocese closely aligned with Sydney, and at least three other members have evangelical sympathies.

Concerning the Panel of Electors of the Primate, of the 12 members of the clergy to be elected by the House of Clergy, four are from the Diocese of Sydney, and at least another six have evangelical credentials. Interestingly, the Principal of Moore College, Dr Mark Thompson, was one of the three clergy in this election on the last qualifying equal vote and failed, like Joseph called Barsabbas, to be elected by the drawing of lots (Acts 1:21-26)! It was also a similar situation with respect to the 12 members of the laity, with three members from the Diocese of Sydney and three further from dioceses aligned with Sydney and at least one known to have evangelical sympathies. Finally, with respect to elections to the important Appellate Tribunal, the three people elected included our Archbishop and Chancellor of Sydney Diocese.

What all of this indicates is that the more conservative evangelical faction of the Anglican Church of Australia is increasing its dominance and control the various General Synod related bodies.

The business of the recent General Synod included a resolution urging members of the Anglican Church of Australia to pursue net zero carbon emissions by 2040 in operations across Australia. A new Families and Culture Commission was established to seek to address intimate partner violence

which is a scourge which impacts members of the Church and the wider community. There was also a resolution passed which supports the campaign to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years of age with the aim of reducing the number of children in juvenile detention.

However, the most contentious and widely reported business of the recent session of General Synod yet again concerned motions relating to marriage, human sexuality and same-sex relationships.

There were three motions which were essentially moved in response to the November 2020 majority decision of the Appellate Tribunal that liturgies for the blessing of civil same sex marriages were not inconsistent with the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling Principles of the Constitution of the Church. The first motion was proposed by conservative critics of the Appellate Tribunal decision that:

*Pursuant to the authority recognised in s.4 and s.26 of the Constitution to make statements as to the faith, ritual, ceremonial or discipline of this Church, and in accordance with the procedures set out in Rule V, the General Synod hereby states:*

*1. The faith, ritual, ceremonial and discipline of this Church reflect and uphold marriage as it was ordained from the beginning, being the exclusive union of one man and one woman arising from mutual promises of lifelong faithfulness, which is in accordance with the teaching of Christ that, "from the beginning the Creator made them male and female", and in marriage, "a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Matt 19:4-5).*

*2. In 2004 (Resolutions 62/04, 63/04) General Synod did 'not condone the liturgical blessing of same sex relationships' nor 'the ordination of people in committed same sex relationships' recognising that both matters were subject to 'ongoing debate in this church and that we all have an obligation to listen to each other with respect.*

*3. In 2017 the Commonwealth Parliament amended the definition of 'marriage' in the Marriage Act (1961) to mean 'the union of 2 people to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life', thereby making lawful the marriage of two persons of the same sex and presenting this church with a profoundly altered missional and pastoral context.*

*4. The solemnisation of a marriage between a same-sex couple is contrary to the teaching of Christ and the faith, ritual, ceremonial and/or discipline of this Church.*

*5. Any rite or ceremony that purports to bless a same-sex marriage is not in accordance with the teaching of Christ and the faith, ritual, ceremonial and/or discipline of this Church.*

It was decided to conduct the vote on this motion by separate Houses, remembering that it is necessary to achieve a majority in each of the three houses – Bishops, Clergy and Laity. It failed, just. The motion received a majority vote in the Laity (63-47), an even more decisive majority in the Clergy (70-39), but was unsuccessful in the Bishops (10-12).

After the vote, the Archbishop of Sydney was granted leave to make a personal response. In this response he expressed deep regret at the outcome and that in his view, failing to affirm this statement left the Anglican Church of Australia in a perilous position.

A second motion was also proposed by conservative critics of the Appellate Tribunal decision that:

*Pursuant to the authority recognised in s.4 and s.26 of the Constitution, to "make statements as to the... discipline of this Church", and in accordance with the procedures set out in Rule V, the General Synod states that it continues to hold the historic view that unchastity means sexual intimacy outside*

*a marriage relationship, defined in the Book of Common Prayer as the union of one man and one woman, in accordance with Jesus' teaching about marriage in Matt 19:4-5.*

This motion was again voted on in Houses and was carried. The Laity voted in favour of the motion (62-48) as did the Clergy (69-39). And this time, the Bishops also narrowly supported the motion (12-11).

A third motion was proposed by progressive supporters of the Appellate Tribunal decision. This motion sought to affirm same-sex marriage:

*The General Synod:*

*a) welcomes the introduction of civil same-sex marriages in Australia as providing a state-based way of recognising faithfulness, love and commitment;*

*b) gives thanks for the public witness of Christian same-sex couples;*

*c) notes the diversity of theological and legal viewpoints published by the Doctrine Commission, Marriage, Same-Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia, and that this diversity of viewpoints is found among faithful, committed Anglicans who worship in all dioceses of the Anglican Church of Australia;*

*d) affirms that marriage is not considered a matter pertaining to salvation in this Church, as noted by the Appellate Tribunal Wangaratta Reference [140]: "at many points in time between 1662 and the present day, that doctrine [of marriage] was changed in response to different understandings of Scripture, changing perceptions about the respective roles of men and women, and the need to accommodate the law of the land .... These changes never signalled that the Church of England's teachings expounded during the solemnisation rite were being proclaimed as matters going to salvation or part of the 'faith' of the Church"; and recognising that in heaven we shall neither marry nor be given in marriage (Mk 12:25);*

*e) notes that at no point in the process of the General Synod's passing of canons relating to holy matrimony (Solemnization of Matrimony Canon 1981, Marriage of Divorced Persons Canon 1981, Matrimony (Prohibited Relationships) Canon 1981) was reference made to constitutional impediments to such, as noted by the Appellate Tribunal Wangaratta Reference [141];*

*f) acknowledges the continual evolution within the church, including the Anglican Church of Australia, of its position on moral issues – such as slavery, capital punishment, interracial marriage, contraception, the equality of men and women – and the concomitant absence of any such moral injunctions in the historic Creeds;*

*g) considers same-sex marriage as a moral good and a gift to be celebrated, providing an enrichment of the Christian understanding of marriage and a witness to God's grace and love, consistent with the testimony of Scripture and Anglican tradition as expressed in the historic Creeds.*

The motion was not voted on in Houses but by a vote of the Synod as a whole and was defeated (95-145).

As a result of the defeat of the first motion proposed by conservative critics of the Appellate Tribunal decision, the questions on everyone's mind were: "What would be the implications for the future of the Anglican Church of Australia as we have known it?" and "What would be the response by conservative critics of the Appellate Tribunal decision?" We have not had to wait too long with respect to an answer to the second question.

As we have previously reported, Gafcon Australia resolved to establish a new allegedly Anglican church entity in Australia outside of the Anglican Church of Australia. It did so in September 2021 with the establishment of the “Diocese of the Southern Cross”, an Australian Public Company, limited by guarantee.

At the recent Gafcon Australasian Conference held in Canberra on 15-18 August, the Diocese of the Southern Cross was officially launched. At this conference it was also announced that the first congregation of the Diocese of the Southern Cross commenced at Beenleigh in Brisbane on Sunday 14 August and that its first bishop would be the former Archbishop of Sydney, Glenn Davies.

Reaction to this move has again been swift. The Primate, Geoff Smith, Archbishop of Adelaide, issued a statement on 18 August. Noting that while the Diocese of the Southern Cross, is “structured to mirror some of the characteristics of an Anglican diocese”, the Primate stated firmly that it *“has no formal or informal relationship or connection with the Anglican Church of Australia. As such it will operate independently from the Anglican Church as, effectively, a new denomination.”*

The Primate then concluded by reflecting that: *“It is always easier to gather with those we agree with. But in a tragically divided world God’s call and therefore the church’s role includes showing how to live together with difference. Not merely showing tolerance but receiving the other as a gift from God. My conviction is that the Anglican Church of Australia can find a way to stay together, graciously reflecting God’s great love, with our differences held sincerely. This week’s announcement makes achieving that end more difficult but not impossible.”*

On the same day, our Archbishop of Sydney also issued a media release in response to the creation of the Diocese of the Southern Cross. Archbishop Raffel firstly offered words of reassurance to Sydney Anglicans: *“The Diocese of Sydney is an integral part of the Anglican Church of Australia and we have no intention of leaving. All of our parishes, schools and other diocesan institutions will remain part of the Anglican Church of Australia. We are committed to the reform of the Anglican Church of Australia from within our existing ecclesial structures including the General Synod.”* The Archbishop then concluded his media release by outlining his conviction that the Diocese of the Southern Cross: *“is for the sake of those elsewhere who have been forced to leave their Church because they cannot in good conscience accept the authority of those who have departed from the teaching of Christ on marriage and human sexuality. It is a sadness that this new Diocese has become necessary but I extend the hand of fellowship to the Diocese of the Southern Cross and may God bless Bishop Davies and his work.”*

Questions have already been raised in some quarters as to whether this “extending of the hand of friendship” to the Diocese of the Southern Cross may also extend to the “expending of funds and financial support” to the Diocese of Southern Cross by the Diocese of Sydney? This remains to be seen and may very well be an issue raised at the forthcoming Sydney Diocesan Synod.

**The Reverend Dr Max Wood, President**