



Anglican Diocese
of Adelaide

Book of Proceedings

Discussion Forums for members of Synod

“How do we share in God’s mission in light of the theological, pastoral and practical issues arising from the collection of essays published as Marriage, Same Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia?”

Friday, 19 & Saturday, 20 March 2021

**St John The Evangelist Church
10 Church Street, Salisbury**

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Introduction

The Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide in October 2019 resolved:

THE DOCTRINE COMMISSION ESSAYS

That this Synod:

1. recognise the courageous and thoughtful contributions by the Rev'd Associate Professor Matthew Anstey and the Rev'd Dr Katherine Smith to the Doctrine Commission's recently published collection of essays on Same-Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia.
2. requests that the Diocesan Council, before next year's Synod, arranges for at least two discussion forums allowing for respectful, mediated and safe discussion of the significant theological, pastoral and practical issues raised by this publication.

Moved by The Rev'd Canon Stephen Daughtry

Seconded by The Rev'd Paula Bullock

CARRIED

Diocesan Council then resolved that there would be a discussion forum with all members of Synod invited to participate.

Deferred due to COVID-19 restrictions, the discussions were finally able to be held in early 2021. Clergy members of Synod participated on Friday, 19 March 2021 and lay members participated on Saturday, 20 March 2021.

Each forum consisted of six hours of self-organising dialogue, in response to the gathering question:

How do we share in God's mission in light of the theological, pastoral and practical issues arising from the collection of essays published as Marriage, Same Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia?

A professionally skilled facilitator from outside the diocese was engaged: the Reverend Bronwyn Pagram from Brisbane. Bronwyn is a priest serving an ethnically diverse parish in Ipswich, located in one of the lowest socio-economic regions in the country. Prior to ordination Bronwyn had a very significant career in the energy industry including leading the project office for the BP internal accident investigation team for the *Deepwater Horizon* Gulf of Mexico explosion and spill. Bronwyn is trained and experienced in leading Open Space conversation methodology.

THE FORMAT OF THE DAY:

Each day opened with a short welcome from Secretary of Synod, Joe Thorp, followed by a morning prayer service led by Archbishop Geoff, then the introductory remarks by Archbishop Geoff. The Archbishop then left and proceedings were then led by our facilitator.

Facilitated by:

The Rev'd Bronwyn Pagram Bronwyn.Pagram@anglicanchurchsq.org.au
Tel: 0439 777 992

Open Space

The Rev'd Bronwyn Pagram, an expert Open Space facilitator then explained the process and opened up the circle for everyone who wanted to put forward topics and create the agenda. This was followed by three periods of breakout dialogues, and a final closing session.

Participants made valuable use of the time together, to listen deeply and share ideas. For many participants, it was the first time they had opportunity to raise an issue, or have their voice heard in this important discussion.

Approximately 42 topics were canvassed during the breakout conversations each day and seven Action Plans were proposed.

Toward the end of each day participants were asked to reflect and complete the sentence '**As I have been in dialogue, I been noticing...**' or '**.... I have been surprised by...**'. Those comments are included in this report.

In addition we sought input from participants on what what Diocesan Council might consider in planning the second of the required discussion forums.

You can view pre-Open Space explanatory material at the link:

<https://adelaideanglicans.com/news-events/a-conversation-about-the-doctrine-commission-essays-on-marriage-same-sex-marriage-and-the-anglican-church-of-australia/>

A NOTE ABOUT THE BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS:

This Book of Proceedings contains all the notes and plans made by participants on the day. i.e. it is a literal transcription, or summary, of conversation points, as reported by participants themselves. It is not a verbatim recording, nor a "report" on the day. Participants were sent a draft of this report and given the opportunity to correct any errors or omissions.

As such, no responsibility is taken for "fact-checking." Notes may contain opinions of an individual, group, and/or the note-taker which do not reflect the opinions or position of the Anglican Church of Australia or the Diocese of Adelaide more widely.

The intent of Open Space is to allow room for self-organising and for things to emerge. These notes capture just a snapshot of conversations and are intended as a prompt for memory, for ongoing conversation and action for those with passion and responsibility.

**Joe Thorp
Secretary of Synod
March 2021**

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Welcome Message from Archbishop Geoffrey Smith

“Welcome everyone to this day of conversation. For me conversation implies speaking and listening, it’s a two way process and that’s what we are here for. The conversation today is the first of two that synod in 2019 requested Diocesan Council to organise on the issues that come out of the book put together by the Doctrine Commission of our church entitled *Marriage, Same Sex Marriage and the Anglican Church of Australia*.

That book is in response to a resolution of the General Synod in 2017. So the parameters for the book were set by the General Synod, and today’s conversation was requested by our synod. As I said today is one of two days our synod resolution requested. Diocesan Council will plan the second conversation on the basis of what seems helpful after today.

Today is not a decision making day, it’s a conversation day. It’s a listening day, a learning day and an understanding day.

In the end decisions are made by our synod and the general synod and we work with the ordinances and canons adopted by those bodies.

Today we are using a method for conversation called Open Space. It has been around for quite a while though I think it might be new to Adelaide diocese.

I am aware that conversations about marriage and same sex marriage can sometimes be confronting. Our own experience, those of our friends and family as well as strongly held opinions or uncertainties can contribute to an emotional response which we might find surprising or troubling.

I encourage you to engage with the process respectfully and with an open heart, to listen carefully and consider graciously.”

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Those Attending

Clergy

Friday, 19 March 2021

President: *The Most Rev'd Geoffrey Smith*
Archbishop of Adelaide and Metropolitan of South Australia

The Right Rev'd Dr Tim Harris
Assistant Bishop – Parish of Elizabeth

The Right Rev'd Chris McLeod
Assistant Bishop – Parish of Woodville

The Right Rev'd Denise Ferguson
Assistant Bishop of the Diocese of Adelaide

Rev'd Assoc Prof	Matthew	Anstey	Belair
Rev'd Dr	Josephine	Armour	Brighton
Rev'd	Samson	Asirvatham	Woodville
Rev'd	July	Ayuen	Salisbury
Rev'd	Peter	Balabanski	St John's Halifax Street
The Ven	David	Bassett	Diocese of Adelaide
Rev'd	Martin	Bleby	Coromandel Valley
Rev'd	Stephen	Bloor	Christ Church North Adelaide
Rev'd	Paula	Bullock	AnglicareSA
Rev'd Canon	Stephen	Daughtry	Belair
Rev'd Canon	William	Deng	St Mary's
Rev'd	Julia	Denny-Dimitriou	St Peters
Rev.	Karl	Forsyth	Holy Trinity
Rev'd	Marian	Giles	Warradale
The Ven	Sam	Goodes	Walkerville
Rev'd	Zinkoo	Han	Kidman Park & Mile End
Rev'd Dr	Simon	Hill	Largs Bay
Rev'd	Peter	Jin	St Peter's Cathedral
Rev'd	Stuart	Langshaw	Anglican Diocese of Adelaide
The Ven	Mee	Lau	Unley
Rev'd	Matt	Lehmann	Holy Trinity
Rev'd	David	MacGillivray	St Francis Congregation

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Rev'd	Simon	Marshman	Holy Trinity
The Ven	Ruth	Mathieson	Semaphore
Rev'd	Robert	McEwin	Magill
`Rev'd	John	Miller	Henley & Grange
The Ven	Andrew	Mintern	Glenelg
Rev'd	Cameron	Munro	Holly Trinity
Rev'd	Barbara	Paull-Hunt	Somerton Park/Warradale
Rev'd	Janet	Phillips	Payneham
Rev'd	Nathanael	Reuss	Kensington/Norwood
Rev'd	Yvonne	Riley	Parafield Gardens
Rev'd	Michael	Russell	Magill
Rev'd Prof	Peter	Sandeman	St Peter's Cathedral
Rev'd Dr	Santhosh	Sathya Kumar	Broadview & Enfield
Rev'd	Tim	Sherwell	Prospect
Rev'd Dr	Cathy	Thomson	St Barnabas College
Rev'd Canon	Jenny	Wilson	St Peter's Cathedral
Rev'd	Julie	Worrall	Fullarton

Apology:

Rev'd	Barbara	Messner	Stirling
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Lay

Saturday, 20 March 2021

Mrs.	Susan	Bishop	Glen Osmond
Mr.	Cameron	Burr	Anglican Diocese of Adelaide
Mr.	Ben	Chapman	Holy Trinity
Ms	Lesley	Condie-Drummond	Salisbury
Mr.	Rob	Croser	Glenelg
Ms.	Katherine	Dellit	Woodville
Dr.	Linda	Dillon	Prospect
Mr.	Tim	Earl	St Marys
Dr.	Angela	Evans	St Peter's Cathedral
Ms.	Catherine	Freriks	St Mary Magdalene
Mr.	Bob	Geekie	Somerton Park
Mr.	Bill	Gehling	Hawthorn
Ms.	Ruth	Goodwyn	Port Adelaide
Mrs.	Anne	Greaves	Glenelg
Mrs.	Caroline	Harch	Burnside
Dr.	Howard	Harris	Brighton
Mr.	Peter	Haynes	Ingle Farm Para Hills
Mrs.	Lynette	Ho	Modbury
Mr.	John Andrew	Hunt	Somerton Park
Mr.	Philip	Kernick	Burnside
Miss	Sandra	Malthouse	Port Adelaide
Ms.	Sandy	Mitchell	Anglican Diocese of Adelaide
Ms.	Ann	Nadge	Hawthorn
Mrs.	Margaret	Nelson	Broadview & Enfield
Ms.	Elizabeth	Owen	Walkerville
Mr.	Don	Palmer	Unley
Dr.	David	Phillips	Tea Tree Gully
Ms	Katey	Phillips	Glen Osmond
Mr.	Andrew	Pollitt	Tea Tree Gully
Mr.	David	Purton	Magill
Ms	Tessa	Richmond	Modbury
Miss	Stelianne Estelle	Salagaras	Tea Tree Gully
Mr.	Andrew	Severin	Holy Trinity Adelaide
Mrs.	Lynnette	Thurston	Parafield Gardens
Ms.	Prue	Walker	St. John.Halifax street

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Mrs. Helen Wright Modbury

Apologies:

Dr.	Helen	Martin	Stirling
Ms	Christine	O'Nyons	Warradale
Ms	Meriel	Wilson	Fullarton

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Summary of Topics & Plans

Open Space Agenda – Friday 19th March

CLERGY

The participants created the following agenda:

10.20 – 11.10 am
Space B – How do we maintain fellowship with those who disagree with our conclusions?
Space C – What do we do when scripture seems not to agree with experience?
Space E – How might it be possible to share in mission when the divisions we experience amongst us are of such a fundamental nature?
Space K – How can we have these conversations with our current need to sign the Code of Conduct?
11.10 – 12.00 pm
Space B – What are the most important theological, pastoral and practical issues relevant for us sharing in God’s mission?
Space C – How do we live the belief that love is the highest, and only, Christian law?
Space D – How does this play out in our non-parish communities e.g. schools?
Space E – What is the (or is there any) effect of the Fall in human sexuality?
Space G – Do we look first to God and then to us or v.v. as we define what is ‘love’?
Space H – What are ‘side B’ Christians saying?
Space J – The bible guides us in making decisions. What does the bible say about same-sex marriage and our mission?
Space K – In this marriage called ‘the church’ there are clearly ‘irreconcilable differences’. Is it not time to name them and arrange for an orderly and amicable separation?
12.00 – 12.50 pm
Space A: To what extent are our views on SSM prejudiced by our fear and anxiety? What would SS couples say?
Space B – Handling such issue in light of multi-cultural context
Space C – The book includes essays valuing singleness and friendship. As members of ACA how do we value ways of Christian life and witness other than heterosexual marriage?
Space D – What belong to God and what belong to Caesar in our time?

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Space E – How do we make feel welcome – to the community of God’s love – those who have been excluded and feel rejected by that community?
Space H – How can we learn from the experience of others within the Anglican Communion such as in New Zealand, the USA, Canada, the UK, etc?
Space K – Are conducting same-sex marriages and blessing same-sex civil marriages of the same order theologically?
12.50 – 1.40 pm
Space C – If theological differences prove irreconcilable how can we as Church accommodate different pastoral approaches?
Space E – How do we – in our lives and ministry – manage the pastoral and missional outcomes of being unable to bless what might appear to be fruitful and good?
Space F – Should priests no longer be marriage celebrants?
Space G – God created a world full of difference and sees it as ‘good’: we often struggle with difference. God asks us to love one another with fidelity. Is our struggle with difference a reflection that is relevant to this issue?
Space H: How do we provide pastoral care to Christians experiencing same-sex attraction yet believe that scripture teaches that sex is for man/woman marriage only?
Space J – How does our culture influence our theology? What can be considered ‘lived experience’ or ‘taboo’?

Session One

Open Space Group Report

19 March 2021

Time met: 10.30am

Space used: B

Topic: How do we maintain fellowship with those who disagree with our conclusions?

Conversation convened by: Stuart Langshaw

Discussion points:

Different points of view do not necessarily need to lead to divisiveness – even enmity.

Gospel unity is deeper than human unity.

We do have a unity within the Anglican Church, and it is possible to have a broad Anglican unity within our Diocese.

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Would that we had such a passion for unity and maintaining it as we do for those things that we regard as separating us.

Can we continue to mission together when there are things that apparently divide us? Yes we can.

We can maintain fellowship by working together.

Elastic bands stretch, but maintain their “unity” and oneness, and thus within the “elastic band” of the church it is possible to maintain our life together even when we are stretched by such an important issue of same-sex relationships and marriages.

We are a church are a family, and we, like all families, agree to disagree.

But – what do we mean when we say “What is the Gospel?”

Is the question of same-sex marriage a “core” gospel/salvational issue?

The issue of what we find unity in is important. One participant raised that any other unity outside of “gospel unity” (necessarily containing what the gospel is and what is necessary for salvation) is a man made unity that will not stand. Other’s raised in response that we have unity around the liturgy, we have unity in the Archbishop or have unity in our Anglican identity and thought the “gospel unity” call was inaccurate,

One participant raised a counter view on the unity within the Adelaide Diocese using the analogy that if one person in a marriage says “there’s a serious problem with the marriage” the other marriage partner has to acknowledge there’s a big issue. You can’t just keep saying the marriage is fine which is what I feel I’m constantly told.

Further to the above analogy on one person saying there was a problem with the marriage it was discussed whether this was an issue we can agree to disagree over. The analogy was raised that from an evangelical perspective there is a difference between a “closed handed issue”, one which strikes at the gospel core and necessitates division and an “open handed issue” that we can agree to disagree over. For the person who raised this, the same sex marriage blessing discussion highlights an ongoing disagreement over what the gospel is, what is necessary for salvation and as such is a closed handed issue. Being told “no it’s an open handed issue” doesn’t address the core of our disagreement.

Time met: 10.30am

Space used: C

Topic: What do we do when scripture seems not to agree with experience?

Conversation convened by: David Bassett

Discussion points:

This question came up regularly in essays. A theme in the essays.

In the OT, God calls Israel out of the nations to be distinct. The apostle Peter also calls us a holy people. How then do we assess desires and deal with them.

The dilemma is articulated differently according to how we understand scripture and its input to this topic and our response to experience. We have different starting points

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There is license in how scripture is interpreted; not a single meaning. Not required to apply to every imperative. Able to respond to the understanding science helps us to develop.

Is there a prior question – where do we find revelation – not only in scripture, but tradition.

We bring experience to the reading of scripture, but also scripture changes our experience. How we understand scripture does impact our view of the relation between scripture and experiences.

The 30 Articles affirm principles about scripture that are enlivening. “It is not lawful for the church to ordain anything contrary to the scripture”. The OT is not contradictory to the New. Doesn’t make a person an “excavator” of scripture. The key of scripture is Christ offering everlasting life to humanity. Those essays that engaged scripture more thoroughly engaged with this offer of everlasting life. Centring on Christ and his relationship with the church gives us the understanding of marriage.

People of colour often look to how Christians interpreted Scripture in terms of slavery. Clear that scripture spoke clearly about slavery – affirming it as a Christian practice so carefully handling Scripture is so important. The experience of slavery – understood by Wilberforce etc – saw contradictory of scripture. The African-American experience suggests the church can’t be trusted with scripture, or at least, we see we need to take care.

A person with a live theatre background encountered many people who are gay. Who am I to say that gay relationships are not as good. We should love everybody for who they are. It would be good if the church could bless the relationships.

Another person grew up in a church that had people expressing homophobia. Then at University met a gay man. Experience and scripture at that point clashed. Recent Nigerians saying you can’t be gay and Christian. Canada saying you can. It seems we haven’t worked out how to show hospitality to gay people. Not sure how to put together. Scripture saying that people such as this may not be saved, with knowing gay people who are Christians.

The difficulty of saying no to those requesting blessing on their marriages/relationships. How to be church for people?

So far in the discussion we have shared experience. How do we have a godly response to the situation? How to manage difference of opinion, as a community of love and care? For those who want to uphold views of a holy calling, how to do this well.

There is something in the struggle. We should honour the struggle. We’re not perfect beings. So if we’re aware of the struggle, we can keep aiming at the goal of loving each other.

Time met: 10.35am

Space used: E

Topic: How might it be possible to share in mission when the divisions we experience amongst us are of such a fundamental nature?

Conversation convened by: Cameron Munro

Discussion points:

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The doctrine commission book seems to prevent polar opposites, is there scope for “common ground” nuanced positions?

How core to our mission is our unity?

Reflections on the NZ experience – division; alternative episcopal support

Recognising that even if union is ideal, how that plays out in practice in the real world is very different – difference is very deeply held by all parties, recognising that the values held are held in good conscience and passion for God.

Time met: 10.30 am

Space used: K

Topic: How can we have these conversations with our current need to sign the Code of Conduct?

Conversation convened by: Ruth Mathieson

Discussion points:

People who are gay, trans don't feel safe talking, especially if engaged in ministry, in case someone else reports you for engaging “unchaste” behaviour.

Since code of conduct, gay marriage has been legalised, so now complying with code of conduct, although some people would still say they are not, so how do we update code of conduct.

Can we progress debate on same sex marriage when “Faithfulness in Service” in its current format.

Marriage in code of conduct is “church” marriage not “federal government” marriage. Also some gay couples living in marriage “style” relationships.

People in heterosexual “defacto” relationships don't get reported under “faithfulness in service” - grey area here.

Some of us though asserted that in some churches that they would be reported. Or that “defacto relationships” not asked to be in ministry positions – encouraged to be chaste or married.

Some Dioceses have edited/adapted code of conduct.

Clergy can feel disappointed when other clergy stand up and speak against what they have assented to or agreed to defend – being “faithfulness in service”.

Church throughout history has different understandings of common-law marriage eg polygamy not prohibited. There are grey areas. How do you grapple with history and biblical interpretation – and then define a “code of conduct” around it.

Question asked – is our humanity fluid – are we different humans 50 years ago 2000 years ago.

Posited that maybe our understandings are different – eg way women treated 50 years ago, different to now (thank goodness) - or biblical marriage – would we be Hagar Sarah? However, maybe biblical stories show how bad things go, when marriage is NOT biblical.

What is code of conduct? - is it to reassure the community or for us. What is it for – is it to enforce certain behaviours for church workers etc or to reassure people outside church.

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Open Space

Session Two

Open Space Group Report

19 March 2021

Time met: 11.10 am

Space used: B

Topic: What are the most important theological, pastoral and practical issues relevant for us sharing in God's mission?

Conversation convened by: Mike Russell

Discussion points:

Pastoral is central – inclusion, compassion; rather than focus on doctrine. Emphasis on comparison, healing.

As aged-care Chaplain, the emphasis / important thing is to be a pastoral person. In the case of LGBTIQ+ people, the tendency to ostracise them is dying out. Doctrine of the church is unhelpful/hurtful to people. Sad that the church won't bless a civil union for people who can't help who they are.

That might make it hard for you to work missionally with colleagues/ people who hold a different view on these matters.

Not necessarily – can work with those of differing views.

So, we can ignore theological issues and focus on pastoral together?

Church needs to catch up with the pastoral – what was Jesus doing? Of M. Anstey's paper on deep teaching of scripture.

So you can work with people of different views.

Blessing civil unions – refusal is a problem point. Jesus confronted such laws and regulations.

So to summarise – there is a big issue – a church that has this exclusive theology in this particular case the thing we have to work on.

Yes.

So theology is the thing we have to work on. My best reading of the scripture is live chastity in marriage and singleness. A matter of repentance into salvation. Our aim is to bring people to faith and repentance.

So you won't marry gay/lesbian people, but some say that's what Jesus would do. So we agree to disagree.

Were the ordinances to give choices of some churches allowing, but some not allowing same sex unions, I'd strive to get out of under those ordinances, but remain Anglican in some other shape or form.

So it's a bit like your non-acceptance of women clergy?

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Different, not so important.

A long, meandering discourse on how mission works across the Anglican spectrum vis-a-vis other denominations – sometimes God/spirit works through teachings, scripture and through symbolism.

A story about exclusion and welcome of a person in one congregation as distinct from another one.

So a wide-ranging ecclesiology across different congregations allows for inclusivity?

Yes.

But there must come a point around ethics/ ecclesiology etc. Where you look at a congregation and say “Well that’s not actually Christian.”

Time met: 11.10 am

Space used: C

Topic: How do we live the belief that love is the highest, and only, Christian law?

Conversation convened by: Andrew Mintern

Discussion points:

Discussion about differences often take little account of the Biblical passages about love which is the ultimate Christian Law.

Interdependence/ interrelationship of creation means we are all related in our diversity and this should affect our approval to relationship with God and one another.

How do we maintain fellowship with those who disagree with our conclusions? Love is like an elastic band that encompasses many differences.

We as Church are a work in progress – no one knows who they truly are until judgement day (R. Williams).

We often do feel love for people who have different views from our own. It would be poor to understand how we different individuals and groups actually do interact with one another in their/our humanity.

Jesus clearing of the temple – Jesus would not have been experienced as coming here by but the money changes. Same in parental relationships where children experience their parents’ guidance as “late”.

Losing inclusivity in the Church

Pastoral ministries and the Church have boundaries. The power of love has no boundaries – but who decides the boundaries?

Yes it is right to have expectations eg. as a marriage celebrant that people will be faithful. ??? requires faithfulness and integrity in loving relationships.

Nature of God – love with fidelity to the Creation.

Scripture is trans-cultural we aim from learning a variety of voices - same sex deliberations a “western” concern only.

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We do change our views of cultural views re. Women, slavery etc.

What are the tenets that can change and what cant?

Primary of love and mercy important.

Do we actually know what love is?

Gender and sexuality and the love shared by LGBTIQ+ people shouldn't be overruled.

Faithfulness show lessen because people want to offer that.

Disappointment about today – no representative from the gay community present today.

Necessary to work with the meaning of “love” and “gospel”. Do we find a common understanding?

Love has to be the starting point, because God is love.

Jesus' table-turning didn't become a law. It wasn't done every week. Context helps as determinate meaning of the exercise of love.

Time met: 11.10am

Space used: D

Topic: How does this play out in our non-parish communities e.g. schools?

Conversation convened by: David MacGillivray

Discussion points:

- When we say as a church, 'we think this', have to be aware that the culture at the moment is 'if you disagree with me' --> then I tear down everything about you and remove you from my life!!
- Much of our conversation is 'parish-centric' - what about schools etc?
- Doesn't feel safe to be a Christian e.g. in the arts community, because of the public perception of what Christians stand for
- What's the point of our apology to LGBTQ+ communities if the people who it is intended for don't hear it?
- "I grew up in church and when I came to terms with my sexuality I was no longer welcome to come to church"
- Church is "we're here, you came to us"
- Existing relationships, give some of us credibility in secular spaces
- Our theology and theology of church is formed by Spirit and interaction with God's people --> easy to look at gay community and say it's unsafe, promiscuous – there you go. **OR**... you could see the committed couple who foster vulnerable kids, and say "How can that not be good? How is that sinful and evil?"
- Schools are open to all --> no brainer whose side the school is on. Therefore the division in the church has a huge impact on our Anglican school communities who live on that fault line.

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- The book was unhelpful – has ‘for and against’ ... what about the middle ground?! We don’t hear the pastoral stories, or engage in the messiness of life.
- How do we wrap our arms around a hurting world, and come down from our holy, perfect pedestals? We need to be an open space.
- People are being pushed by discourse into one identity, but in fact humans are very much more diverse.
- Apologies are more than words --> our actions don’t display this.
- There has been some progress --> conservatives now acknowledge that same-sex attraction is not wrong, it’s normal.
- Not all parishes are ‘bubbles’ although some parishes have a particular teaching and if you don’t agree, then leave. But at some parishes, openly say, ‘we don’t all agree’.
- But in a school setting for example, we are representing the church so we often have to say what the church believes, even if we find that teaching personally problematic,
- Cultural diversity in Australia and in our churches now
 - Asian churches and schools interlink differently
 - Very closely linked, unlike here where parish is quite separate to school
- Feeling that other people think I hate or condemn them --> don’t understand that
- Within GAFCON there are grades of understanding: so Nigerian --> no such thing as a gay Christian..... Canadians – yes there are!
- Collectively we haven’t talked through in a deep way, “what do we do with the people who are different to us – do we really not want them?” We have only been adversarial. Asian perspective is that we can work together to do this.
- Church has gone from a period where homophobia was collective norm to a social context where it’s completely unacceptable to be homophobic. We haven’t kept up!
- As an institution we are not equipped to deal with this shift
- Have a poor sense of collegiality in Australia church – very easy to avoid people we don’t want to see. In some ways we have become very ‘secular’ in the way we are fragmented and taking very hard lines on matters. Hard to get a grip on what people genuinely think, because they’re scared to speak up. So a contributor to essay was told they’re not Christian or broken their ordination vows, or lost their salvation.
- In NZ, spent time on what vocabulary could be used in conversations
- Much work could be done with these types of (open space) activities to build collegiality.
- Have to bear in mind how our conversations around this topic are heard – because might be heard around whether I’m “good or bad”
- When we bless, or don’t bless, we are stating where God is and isn’t. Jesus’ biggest critics said he mixed with the wrong people!

- Acceptance and love by everyone but Church (with a big C)... although story told about same-sex couple announcing their marriage in their church with a response of joy and affirmation (church with a little c)

Time met: 11.10 am

Space used: E

Topic: What is the (or is there any) effect of the Fall in human sexuality?

Conversation convened by: Zinkoo Han

Discussion points:

Zinkoo introduced the topic.

The fall is a very important part of Christian doctrine, yet, none of the essays of the doctrinal commission this doctrine is discussed. My opinion is that we cannot simply assume what is natural is what is creation order.

God's love extends to us despite being angry with us as seen in the fall. "I love you, but go and sin no more"

Not all effects of the fall are a result of sin – sickness. Orphans and widows are a result of the fall This is/does not make orphans and windows sinful. Is it possible to say that human nature is broken. What is broken in us today?

We have an imbalance in relationship with domestic violence. Gen – your desire will be to rule over your husband. Yet NT ethics helps us to see the restorative aspects of Christ.

Restorative world happens in Christ.

The papers do not talk about either the fall or the new creation. Does this mean we miss God's intention for people?

Should we still be providing eschatological hope?

Katie Smith's essay speaks of a disordered world.

My experience is of the disorder, but scripture speaks of the ordered world and we are called to start living out that new order.

The world today is not so different to what it once was. Good and evil has always existed. Judgement has been part of God's story. We too are called to make judgements.

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Open Space

Time met: 11.10 am

Space used: G

Topic: Do we look first to God and then to us or v.v. as we define what is love?

Conversation convened by: Cameron Munro

NO POINTS RECORDED

Time met: 11.10am

Space used: H

Topic: What are 'side B' Christians saying?

Conversation convened by: Nat Reuss

Discussion points:

'Side B' Christians are celibate gay Christians who hold to the traditional understanding of Christian marriage as between man and woman (A good book ref. is "A War of Loves").

'Side B' is a label they have given themselves to describe their difference.

'Side B' Christians can often feel and be marginalised by liberals and evangelicals alike.

'Side B' Christians find the church and its current traditional position on marriage a safe place to be. A divided or split church would become unsafe for them.

'Side Christians emphasise and lead us in an awareness of the intimacy that we have in our relationship with God.

How can we offer...

- Pastoral support for unwanted same-sex attractions, by people who have been hurt by their experiences in the gay community and who have wanted to get away

The doctrine commission essays on same-sex marriage doesn't give sufficient voice to this part of the gay Christian community... therefore the doctrine commission doesn't satisfactorily fulfill the outcome of 1998 Lambeth resolution 1.10 to 'commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons...'

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Open Space

Time met: 11.10 pm

Space used: J

Topic: The Bible guides us in making decisions. What does the Bible say about same-sex marriage and our mission?

Conversation convened by: July Ayuen

NO POINTS RECORDED

Time met: 11.10am

Space used: K

Topic: In this marriage called 'the church' there are clearly 'irreconcilable differences'. Is it not time to name them and arrange for an orderly and amicable separation?

Conversation convened by: Julia Denny-Dimitriou

Discussion points:

- Acknowledge that this is a confronting question!
- Comes from the experience of being ignored at clergy gatherings because of being a female priest
- This is a basic issue (which holds deep pain) at the heart of our existence together
- Synod is adversarial, so not the place to discuss these issues
- We are family (in Christ). Families should be able to 'agree to disagree'.
- Welcome gay people to community. But not to bless unions.
- What is the definition of 'irreconcilable differences'? May not be to SSM issue at all but rather 'what is the gospel?'
- 'Not prepared to wait' - this might be the precipitating issue.
- Even in waiting, there will inevitably be hurt and pain as people don't agree with the decision. Can we therefore do better than other places have done, and make a split 'amicable'?
- Experience of Presbyterian Church becoming 'Uniting' or not was shared. Could this be a model that helps in learning?
- Some think we are much further along the process at a National level
- There are a large number of Anglicans who don't support SSM, but also don't support GAFCON. Is there a way forward that honours this group?
- Stronger sense emerging that there is a 'hardening' of positions in this regard --> time to separate!
- Split... one leaves, OR, an agreement is reached to part ways.
- Some are looking to see what the 'other side' does
- The Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia is very difficult (impossible) to change
- Property is the central part to the process of splitting

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- There is great sadness in talking about this!
- Other parts of the Anglican Communion are not yet having this conversation because their established culture has not yet even accepted / agreed to talk about SSM / gay issues.
- We read the Bible very differently. It is almost a 'waste of time' in speaking to some who hold the absolute inerrancy of scripture.
- There are deep cultural issues at play (within the Anglican Church of Adelaide) which need to be taken into account
- Many of our parishes contain a big percentage of people who are in the middle of this position
- Broad sense: a split is more likely than not, but if it happens we MUST do it better than others have done.

Session Three

Open Space Group Report

19 March 2021

Time met: 12.00 noon

Space used: A

Topic: To what extent are our views on SSM prejudiced by our fear and anxiety? What would SS couples say?

Conversation convened by: Tim

NO POINTS RECORDED

Time met: 12.00 noon

Space used: B

Topic: Handling such issues in light of multi-cultural context

Conversation convened by: Mee Ping Lau

Discussion points:

- What place do cultural differences and understanding of theology have?
- How do we give a voice to minority people?
- Many ethnic groups continue an historical orthodox understanding of sexuality and how do we care for them?
- Any decision made without significant communication will be hurtful to groups

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Open Space

- Being aware of the minority culture living within a dominant culture that is different and moving in different ways?
- Traditional cultures who are willing to say 'this is who you are', versus modern Western culture that is progressive of views.
- A number of cultures still look to the authoritative voice of the leader
- Individual cultural distinctives working / living in a society that is different especially in Biblical explanations of an issue.
- If there is just a call to love and embrace all people what is the meaning of the gospel and the work of Jesus?
- How do we grow the unity as a new people that is a joining of all nations, languages and peoples?
- The world may change but God's word remains

Time met: 12.00 noon

Space used: C

Topic: The book includes essays valuing singleness and friendship. As members of ACA how do we value ways of Christian life and witness other than heterosexual marriage?

Conversation convened by: Ruth Mathieson

Discussion points:

In book – there is an acknowledgement that often we overlook the state of being single. There is a phenomenon in society of people choosing to marry themselves. Have we made the ideal of marriage so high, that we do not acknowledge a non-married state. Marriage can be seen as a pinnacle. The experience of living in religious community is enriching.

Some people living in celibate relationships, even in a marriage.

Living in a single state – buy flowers, music while I eat.

Do we devolve other ways of living in the world.

Pressure to have the “ideal wedding” and “ideal marriage”.

What is the church doing to provide support for those who have left a way of life and come into the church.

Some cultures – it is difficult to be single and how does the church address this? Up to 40% of households are single persons.

Catholic church – values celibacy. The male priesthood was an escape for many gay men.

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Open Space

Young people – entirely different views - “explosion of diversity” constant learning about the nature of gender, sexuality...

Use of different pronouns – how do you want to be referred to?

The discussion is not simply restricted to “same-sex” marriage – the need to include transgender, binary etc.....

Damage done by “categorising” people – all persons are complete individuals – we use labels.

Labels can be damaging – arouse prejudice.

When young people are growing and exploring they need time to do that without judgement.

Example from a school formal of “hybrid” dressing – transgender experience.

Feel ill equipped to face these issues. Young people do not seem to be phased by this. This is talked about – it was not talked about when some of us were young.

Catholic Church – expect celibacy for life or marriage for life but what about those who choose celibacy for a short time.

We live longer now – there are seasons of life – seasons of celibacy.

Is committed relationship only about sex?

It seems that “the transgression” is same sex sexual relations, not s.s. orientation.

Why is the acceptance of homosexuality or not such a divisive issue?

Time met: 12.00 noon

Space used: D

Topic: What belongs to God and what belongs to Caesar in our time?

Conversation convened by: William Deng

NO POINTS RECORDED

Time met: 12.00 noon

Space used: E

Topic: How do we make people feel welcome – to the community of God’s love – those who have been excluded and feel rejected by that community?

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Open Space

Conversation convened by: Dave MacGillivray

Discussion points:

- The problem of people with same-sex attraction having felt excluded and not welcome. So what would it take to become welcoming?
 - A question is – what does it mean to be welcoming?
 - The parish system may be holding us back. We may need different types of Christian communities e.g. an Arts church
 - Yet even when SSA people are welcomed by some Christians, they would still say that they don't feel welcome in church.
 - Some parishes are welcoming, yet there is a way in which the 'church', the larger structure, is still not accepting.
 - An awareness of how culture perceives our communication. The hurt of the past means people hear things with more difficulty or pain. They won't hear nuance, but rejection.
 - Is this because the culture's definition of welcoming is to affirm a person?
 - If we do not affirm a person's sexual choices, we should be able to love people like Jesus did.
 - If the church maintains its position not conducting same-sex marriages, how do we show welcome?
 - We need our people embedded in local communities because people respond to relationships
 - It would be helpful if we stop being marriage celebrants. Then we are not seen as making a judgement on them.
 - A recovery of 'holy matrimony' as distinct from civil 'marriage'
 - The first priority is to share the gospel with people, so that any change that happens in their life rather than imposed from the outside.
-

Time met: 12.00 noon

Space used: H

Topic: How can we learn from the experience of others within the Anglican Communion such as in New Zealand, the USA, Canada, the UK, etc?

Conversation convened by: Matt Lehmann

Discussion points:

- Summary given of previous discussion – extremes and large middle – inevitability of split but huge desire to model a good way cf. NZ, USA etc.
 - Do we separate, or stay together in separate streams?
 - Relief that this is being named
-

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Open Space

- Model respect and love in this
 - Unhealthy culture of ignoring what we don't like
 - Possibility of coming away hopeful from today
 - How do we model disagreeing and possibly separating for the world cf. USA, NZ
 - Honesty – saying we see the bible differently
 - Problem in USA – who owns what? Property.
 - Here – model trust deed
 - Instead of 'some stay / some go' - can we have something new with us all under one banner?
 - Finding common mind, amicable?
 - Most 'heat' is in finance/property
 - Other view – strongly against separation – learn from those who have taken this path!
 - Bishop's conference – abuse payments tied to assets of dioceses --> liability to honour redress payments – cannot legally do 'property separations'
 - Bishops look at USA and say 'we don't want to go there'
 - NZ – most hopeful – maintaining fellowship and respectful relationships – twelve years of conversations about this
 - Affirm doctrine of marriage in NZ, "holy matrimony", recognising we are called to be in wider world... work on 'blessing' - what is meant by this?
 - NZ – if you feel the need to go, go with our goodwill, keep space for those who wish to keep traditional view of marriage – bishops invite another bishop to pastorally support
 - Profound learning from NZ – listening to everyone, taking time
 - Here, suspicion of 'centre' - those there don't feel safe
 - NZ – give bishops authority to enter into pastoral space
 - "I pray that God will go with you whatever lies ahead" - prayer for same-sex couple – pastor's response
 - Recognition of need to give space for people to "be part of / not be part of" (following conscience) pastoral liturgies involving some-sex couples
 - Much more conversation to be had in Australia
 - Restraint about being present / paying a part at same-sex weddings to enable conversations to continue.
-

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Open Space

Time met: 12.00 noon

Space used: J

Topic: Are conducting same-sex marriages and blessing same-sex civil marriages of the same order theologically?

Conversation convened by: Cathy Thompson

Discussion points:

Intro: a lot of theol differences around SSM are irreconcilable and so what are the ways forward for expressions of differences in Anglican Church.

Reading of BCP marriage rite (as doctrine) would make this difficult to pass a General Synod.

But Appellate Tribunal rule that blessing of SSM is not unconstitutional.

It appears then that we can them as of different orders theologically (ie blessing vs officiating at a SSM)

Come along to see what the point is of blessing a civil SSM – is it different to marriage? What is it doing that is not marriage? What do we mean by blessing?

Sacrament happens between the couple themselves – and the blessing is to repay God's blessing did pray for them.

Blessing of a Civil SSM is like reserved sacrament.

They may be of different orders theologically/legally but do we want to say "yes" to either of them.

Blessing pronounces God's approval

Is SSM same as heterosexual marriage – difference in kind.

Should we as leaders in church be blessing something that we see as not scriptural; wouldn't bless a defacto union either.

How do we respond to those in the church who don't believe SSM is a sin and believe that God would pour out God's love on that relationship and be present in that loving relationship.

Is there a possible accommodation to allow this? To allow those who want in good faith to do this whilst allowing those in good faith who don't want to.

Are there things that can tie us together despite our diversity.

Don't see marriage as a sacrament so can marry two non-Christians.

Blessing is a prayer.

Agree there are two different orders of things theologically – there are lesser orders of disagreement but we can see ethical issues with some things being allowed in our church.

What can we bless and what can't we (cars, pets, jewellery) should this be defined – what should be in the group we will bless or what we want

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Open Space

We can bless everything but if the church as a whole says you can bless a SS relationship then I am impinged by that as I serve under the church.

Cf to Julia's group – where did you end up seemed to be an acknowledgement that a discussion will come and how can we do this respectfully.

Situation now that our core foundational commitments have moved to the point that both sides cannot shift.

Blessing there is no legal binding will we have separate "platforms" moving forward. How will we accommodate each other. Think outside the box?

What makes us an apostolic church? (is believing different response to the issue affect apostolicity).

The theological order of questions is heavily influenced by the culture you are part of.

So many things we are agreed on and other things we vehemently disagree on but that doesn't mean we should split.

Session Four

Open Space Group Report

19 March 2021

Time met: 12.50 pm

Space used: C

Topic: If theological differences prove irreconcilable how can we as Church accommodate different pastoral approaches?

Conversation convened by: Cathy Thomson

Discussion points:

Context: with sadness, the observation is that theological viewpoints ARE irreconcilable. How could we then accommodate different pastoral responses?

Conducting SSM is constitutionally impossible, but there may be some leeway into blessing of civil union.

Question: what are the range of options in relation to "blessing"?

- Blessing those in civil relationships means calling down God's blessing.
- (NB – Blessing does not equate with endorsement)

"We're not there yet", is a Biblical theme, and throughout Church history, divides and splits have occurred. Can we learn from our forebearers?

The church will be fundamentally changed if a division occurs.

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Open Space

Reflection – if only we took the biblical call to unity as seriously and passionately as we did the “Biblical” nature of marriage.

How do we manage this irreconcilable difference? Stop trying to find an agreement, and start looking at how things can go moving forwards.

Cultural issues move far more quickly than the church does. It will always be “running to keep up”. (Our system of Governance probably doesn’t even allow us to keep up.)

Experience and the passage of time sometimes naturally lead to change of heart and mind (and theological positions).

Sometimes we are “as tolerant as we want to be”.

* Would there be an opportunity to hear the perspective of the LGBTIQ+ person in this discussion please?

Would like to see some different models of governance in our responses (not all things we do need to be legislated).

Different communities have different issues (and we see this in the NT with Paul’s letters).

Most profound theological question is “what is God doing?” what do we learn from God in Christ?

Mother’s Union – the challenge that was issued to them “will you welcome other sorts of families in?” This has never been taken up...

(Many)(some) gay couples do not want or desire or need the official blessing of the church. They know already that their relationship is blessed by God. We can offer a huge range of pastoral care which does not need any changes to our legislation or acts of synod.

Experience in Canada was shared – debate at National level and then individual parishes made a decision. It was a big issue which resulted in many people moving parishes. Very emotional / sensitive time.

A sense that the Church is being driven by society / cultural issues.

Time met: 12.50 pm

Space used: E

Topic: How do we – in our lives and ministry – manage the pastoral and missional outcomes of being unable to bless what might appear to be fruitful and good?

Conversation convened by: Steve Daughtry

Discussion points:

The feeling of being compromised in conscience and ministry by our inability to bless relationships.

Does church teaching compromise our ability to welcome people?

How deep is a ‘conditional’ welcome?

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Open Space

A desire to move together – being catholic – matters!

I cannot conceive of a divided church.

We all question aspects of church teaching.

I want to value people who disagree with me.

Dealing with disabled or mentally ill – “they cannot be baptised” parents said. Anathema to God!

The path of carrying exclusion is preferred. The joy of inclusion is preferred.

Someone finally steps out and challenges the accepted teaching.

If it is at God it will happen – but we can’t force it.

Sometimes we need to own our mistakes.

2 Thessalonians, chapter 3: Disobedient to message. Call to accord. But... still part of family.

There is a diversity of disobedience.

Wheat and tares - “let them grow together”

The grace of receiving refusal – we need to be grateful.

Christianity is not the place of comfort.

Church splits are tragic. Division is not from God.

Friendship can transcend theology.

The continuing friendship rely on respect and hope.

Good Chinese food transcend theology.

‘I no longer call you servants, but friends’.

Do we need theology of friendship?

Can we make space for, can we handle each other's ‘truth’?

Can we bring the ‘untouchables’ in?

Indigenous culture: “We can’t make this decision until we have walked together.”

Topic: Should priests no longer be marriage celebrants?

Conversation convened by: Peter Sandeman

Discussion points:

- Priests act as celebrants on behalf of state. But now state has changed its definition of marriage... we are out of step / on a different page.
 - Adopt French style – separate to 2 roles
 - > civil wedding – state
 - > holy matrimony – church
 - Currently welcome LGBTQI to church, but then when they get married, we say “no we can’t do that and push them away.”
 - All sorts of marriage type relationships we don’t acknowledge (friendships) - there is a continuum of relationships – how do we acknowledge and include those relationships in a more creative way?
 - Appellate Tribunal – allows Bishops in diocese to set up liturgies that are not in prayer book – this is how marriage blessings happen – but if we call it “marriage” and try and marry people – it won’t happen.
 - Australia is a loose collection of autonomous dioceses that can do different things ie. Authorised liturgies within legal framework, for different types of relationships. Eg. People who want to have their relationship acknowledged.
 - Why should the church be involved in a legal contract between 2 people?
 - Service for the blessing of relationship – would you do it?
 - We have to follow our current legislation in BCP, church canons etc. Our hierarchies and changes to these processes take time.
 - Government has changed definition of marriage. It’s different to traditional view of marriage in church, according to some viewpoints.
 - But church voice is not one, and maybe we could have one voice if we look at priests and celebrants.
 - But if priests are not celebrants, then gay people still can’t have holy matrimony. But in medium term, our church is not going to allow holy matrimony of gay people, so at least if we have other rites that recognise relationships, there is some “win” for all relationships. Pragmatic solution to current statement of polarised marriage debate.
 - Let the state run the legal bit.
 - Clergy still need to be opt-in and opt-out as “winner takes all” approach where people are forced to do things in inappropriate.
 - Do things slowly, then other people may come on board, and this comment was made in context of multiculturalism
-

Time met: 12.50pm

Space used: G

Topic: God created a world full of difference and sees it as 'good'. We often struggle with difference. God asks us to love one another with fidelity. Is our struggle with difference a reflection that is relevant to this issue?

Conversation convened by: Jenny Wilson

Discussion points:

- We struggle with all kinds of difference – ethnic, language, ... same-sex attraction. Is this a relevant category of 'strangeness'?
- (plants too)
- God is much more accepting than I am
- Is sexuality our coming more and more to see what is acceptable
- Left-handedness used to be a disability/seen as a disability ... is this a relevant category?
- In the case of sexuality (same-sex), what wrong is being done?
- It's not just giving in to society and its change, because faithfulness is still required. God's requirements are strange.
- Is it that people are different now versus 2,000 years ago, or that they were wrong 2,000 years ago?
- It's how people were relating were different
- They didn't understand... there was an issue of fidelity (woman caught in adultery)
- Romantic marriage is a new thing
- Has God's law changed over the centuries?
- What God requires is love, fidelity, not-hurting people. Micah etc. don't hurt each other. Loving God and neighbour. Justice.
- These things are the essence of what God requires
- There is sin, no doubt
- I know two married men who have been devoted for 40 years, care and support of each other, fidelity to one another, sits alongside of scripture, and my faith
- Remember a priest saying, 'you put scripture alongside of life; you let them percolate'
- There is diversity in the whole creation. We can see it as a gift to learn from.
- Ethically, Indian practice of sati needs to be repented of, for salvation... there are circles of exclusion as well as inclusion.
- Importance of ecumenical dialogue, helps us understand each other
- People who differ do so strongly
- What we have in common is our depth of commitment
- If this is a sin, we wouldn't bless
- First time I heard someone say, this is a salvation issue, was surprising. I don't agree with it, but I hear it.

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Open Space

- For many it's a matter of justice, lacking credibility in the church, being forbidden to do what God wants us to do. A rejection of a person's life, their identity.
 - We need to consider our message to the involuntary single: we do ask them to be chaste, that's biblical.
 - Expressing your sexuality is not core to human identity.
-

Time met: 12.50pm

Space used: H

Topic: How do we provide pastoral care to Christians experiencing same-sex attraction yet believe that scripture teaches that sex is for man/woman marriage only?

Conversation convened by: Simon Marshman

Discussion points:

- How do we affirm human fulness and flourishing in celibacy?
 - The world has conflated sex with human fulness and flourishing
 - Recognising that it's not just about sex, but also about recognition, validation etc. --> just as true for celibate SSA as for openly / actively gay
 - Work at reforming church community culture to love across 'nuclear' family units --> stronger, thicker, sacrificial community
 - Putting it in an eschatological frame --> all of us recognising that any present longing for intimacy is pointing us forward to its true fulfilment to come --> relativising it for everyone
 - How do we teach on celibacy and singleness in the context of Christian community?
 - Recognising the encouragement of testimonies of those who have spoken into this space from personal experience.
-

Time met: 12.50pm

Space used: J

Topic: How does our culture influence our theology? What can be considered 'lived experience' or 'taboo'?

Conversation convened by: Zinkoo Han

Discussion points:

Mee Ping: In Chinese culture, some concepts of Christianity is difficult to understand and we had to learn from the culture. I have to shift my perception to understand.

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Open Space

If the Church is influenced by culture of the past, what makes us to think that we are not influenced by our culture? (the essays seems to make the point of past churches biased).

I spent some time in India and learned that transgender people are included so not all tradition of culture is closed to these ideas. What I thought black and white issues (division between traditional and western culture), I can say is not just a cultural matter.

Nevertheless, there is some division in cultural line.

Taboo can work both ways. In the modern culture, saying anything against homosexuals is taboo. How can we say that my thinking is relatively objective?

We cannot easily say the scripture is clear on one issue. It is strange that Anglican Church and Uniting Church the biggest division is on sex.

That is the influence of our culture.

My approach is to learn from history to confirm my cultural bias. I believe when the whole church is in consensus that is the truth so the argument I want to hear from the proponents of homosexual marriage is either that this issue has not been fully addressed by the whole church or that there has always been the support of homosexual marriage within the church. That would be a good starting point for me.

Closing Circle Reflections

19 March 2021

1415

Participants were asked to reflect and complete the sentence ‘.... I have been surprised by...’

The responses were as follows:

- The strong sense of collegiality that was noticeable
- The respecting and listening to each other
- The similarities of thinking, even if there are differences of opinion
- That it was an emotional and emotive issue
- The high quality of people’s thinking and pastoral interaction
- The real empathy and concern for the LGBT community
- The collectivity of Ministry
- The amount of respect, I personally came in with a lot of apprehension of today
- The significance of conscientiousness in the response to this issue
- The sharing of gospel and biblical teaching
- The willingness of all to be open
- The differing opinions, society is different from the Church, how do we straddle both?
- The time one was able to spend in reflection
- Regardless of where one stands, there is grace and good heart
- The nuances in each side
- The striving for unity, was a good chance to meet other clergy
- The amount of questions, every question had more than one answer, which creates more questions
- The ability to share experiences, which doesn’t happen often
- The terms and ideas used – there was an appetite for respectful conversations in this space
- How tiring it was to listen carefully!
- The value of the open space process, and the capacity to have dialogue
- The progressive movement in the questions posed, in sharing experiences
- Purposely going to a circle with someone of a differing view – we agreed to disagree well
- The receptiveness to each other was surprising
- The fact that there were more shades of grey than simple black and white
- Being encouraged in being honest in dealing with the hard questions
- Focusing on what we had in common
- The different dynamic compared to other contexts i.e., clergy gatherings. However, the sessions need more time, the conversations were not really over
- The fact there was a fair bit of laughter
- Feeling safe, because the right people were here, I would not have thought that! (laughter)
- The noticeable grace, the respectful conversations

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Open Space

- At how little same sex marriage was discussed – the honesty that we may be on different paths – relief at the openness and honesty
- The proceedings, and the encouragement that I drew from it
- The respectful listening and willingness to speak on bigger issues i.e., pastoral impact on theology
- How much I enjoyed it!
- The way we spoke to each other, showed the shift in the past several years.

1435

The Secretary of Synod then spoke on the action planning – he described what we are bound by i.e. Synod, General Synod etc.

If any action plans need a budget, figure out where it will come from

Do not wait for the Archbishop, Synod or Synod Office, he encouraged all to do things themselves.

This is the first Open Space Forum/Workshop, what do you want for the second?

1450

The Secretary of Synod asked the hosts that all reports with question marks or highlighted in yellow could they please go and make sure these are corrected?

1520

The action hosts then proceeded to explain their proposed next steps (to be typed up in the Book of Proceedings)

1527

Question to participants - *what do we do with all this? Synod requested two meetings on this topic. What do you suggest the Diocesan Council take into account to plan the next one?*

- The number of participants was good, but not comprehensive because of fear and anxiety. Need to get more
- People here should write out their anxiety so to encourage others to come.
- Promotion will make a difference
- Perhaps invite members of the LGBT community to attend next time? Could improve discussion (there was discussion about withdrawing this)
- This should be considered carefully as you would have to invite those from the other side, which would turn it into a debate
- Who the invitation is made to is a critical decision?
- Longer sessions, have a second one in September, consider one for Synod
- Have a broader conversation than just same sex marriage

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Open Space

- What does Adelaide need?
- While today I was able to share/listen, dealing with the LGBT community directly as a forum like this would require a delicateness. This participant is anxious about it
- More people should be here, maybe the essays were too heavy to read?
- Be interested in what the laity think tomorrow
- Point of view of side-b Christians?
- Reluctant to have us debate this at Synod after this forum. Would like to stay in this mode, not the adversarial system of Synod
- Ask laity?
- This forum was effective because it is neutral, I would not like outside members of the LGBT community invited as it would wreck this neutrality
- Discussion needs to be set up carefully next time – there was a feeling that the invite and phrases were code for something, this may well have led to a particular outcome
- Discussions were good, action plans ok
- Lucky to discuss this topic in the western world, this would not happen in communist China!
- Take it slowly, keep talking
- Diocesan Council to create opportunities for collegial gathering, to hear each other's stories. This is healthy for us as a Church
- Maybe not everyone felt safe today? Not sure as several people did leave during the day
- There are ways to getting other perspectives indirectly, i.e., using technology so as not to make participants feel vulnerable
- High level of anxiety on both sides
- Next step might include clarification on terminology. Why are some terms so important, for good or ill?
- The suggestion to invite external members of the LGBT community is part of a different process to this, but it comes from the right place. We are building a family here.

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Open Space

Action Plans

19 March 2021

Action Plan 1

Focus Area for Action: Conversation about the Theology of Blessing and clarification on the “state of play” re the offering of blessings of same-sex marriage.

Convened by: Cathy Thomson

Offer of support (names / contact details): Barbara Paull-Hunt, Tim Sherwell, William Deng, Peter Sandeman, Simon Marshman, Jo Armour, Zinkoo Han, Chris McLeod

Immediate Next Step/s:

If there is interest, organise a conversation

Person responsible for making sure the first step happens: Cathy Thomson

By when: End of April 2021

Action Plan 2

Focus Area for Action: Exploring models of how parishes in a Diocese and Diocese in the ACA may make different decisions and take different actions.

Convened by: Ruth Mathieson

Offer of support (names / contact details): John Miller, Mee Ping Lau, Peter Jin, Steve Daughtry, Mike Russell, Sam Goodes, Paula Bullock, Marian Giles

Immediate Next Step/s:

- Meet over a meal at the Clergy Conference
- Find out lived experience for other places

Person responsible for making sure the first step happens:

By when:

Action Plan 3

Focus Area for Action: Having Open Space Forum with Clergy and Laity together

Convened by: Matthew Anstey

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Offer of support (names / contact details): Peter Jin, Zinkoo Han, Steve Daughtry, Julia Denny-Dimitriou

Immediate Next Step/s:

- Ask Diocesan Council to consider this idea AND if/how it might lead into/integrate with Synod

Person responsible for making sure the first step happens: Matthew Anstey

By when: Monday

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Open Space

Summary of Topics & Plans

Open Space Agenda – Saturday 20th March

LAITY

The participants created the following agenda:

10.20 – 11.15 am
Space A – Marriage in a post-Christian culture – how does the church preserve a Christian view of marriage in a culture that rejects that view?
Space B – How can ACA deny equity in relationships that are loving, good and Christ-like?
Space C – I’d like to know who is FOR same-sex marriage in first session... then in last session who is FOR in last session?
Space D – How relevant is the Church to the same-sex marriage debate in the wider community?
Space E – The Anglican Church is a communion of people with many different views and preferences – our first task is to seek ways that honour each other and keep the family of Christ together – no winners or losers
Space K – When does the Church consider that the call to holiness may require a stand that is not contrary to scripture?
11.15 – 12.10 pm
Space C – The Australian Anglican Church constitution and connection to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer
Space E – How does the book of essays help us share in God’s mission/vision?
Space J – Pastoral care for people... How should the church care pastorally for people who have identity and relationship problems?
Space K – How might we discern God’s will and purpose for marriage
12.10 – 1.05 pm
Space A: How does the Appellate Tribunal finding impact on the practical issues for Dioceses?
Space B – What thoughts does this group have about the next conversation – where to after this?
Space C – The Anglican Church needs to show respect for all people without discrimination

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Space D – The book of essays highlighted a variety of approaches to reading and understanding the scriptures. What did you think of them?

Space E – God judges – we are commanded to love one another, not to judge

Space J – In what ways can we learn from Jesus’ response to those who were living contrary to God’s design/laws?

Space K – How does the Adelaide Diocese manage conflict between a parish priest and their congregation?

Session One

Open Space Group Report

20 March 2021

Time met: 10.20

Space used: A

Topic: Marriage in a post-Christian culture – how does the church preserve a Christian view of marriage in a culture that rejects that view?

Conversation convened by: David Phillips

Discussion points:

Romans 12: 1

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the reviewing of your mind.

How does the Church remain faithful to God’s word?

Careful about applying directions that no longer are relevant or apply to today.

Important to discern the difference between these things that are eternal and those that are contextual.

Persistent call to not be of this world – leads to difficult places to be. Christians are called to be different.

Post Christian culture

How do we represent traditional Christian ways to the world?

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Open Space

Matter of what we should do not can do. Legal to bless SSM

Different opinions about how to interpret scripture's "words" about marriage.

Why were clergy and laity separated for this Open Space Conference?

Lay people free-er to express their views. Issue is different for clergy and laity. Clergy may be required to choose whether or not to bless same sex marriage.

Time met: 10.30am

Space used: B

Topic: How can ACA deny equity in relationships that are loving, good and Christ-like?

Conversation convened by: Elizabeth Owen

Discussion points:

Intro-

- The lived experience of many same sex relationships seems good
- Equity
- Seems there is no harm and we should do no harm to others

Discussion

- the Bible describes and unequal outcome regarding judgement
 - we are in an unequal space before God – has/will he change?
 - questions of authority? - everyone is working from the scriptures in some way
 - it's hurtful to consider that
 - we all need forgiveness
 - we are all impacted by sin
 - God is good, knows us, wants us to thrive
 - God is love; God has time for people
 - the command not to eat the fruit was arbitrary and didn't seem...
 - we need to trust that God wants what is good.
-

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Open Space

Time met: 10.20am

Space used: C

Topic: I'd like to know who is FOR same-sex marriage in first session... then in last session who is FOR in last session?

Conversation convened by: Linda Dillon

NO POINTS RECORDED

Time met: 10.30am

Space used: D

Topic: How relevant is the Church to the same-sex marriage debate in the wider community?

Conversation convened by: Don Palmer

Discussion points:

- Attended Synod – felt SSM was argued on theological grounds by clergy
- Group member involved in local council with wide range of ages and diversity and first debate about why have a prayer?; prayer rewritten but heavily debated
- Secular world moving on
- Media
- We need to connect with secular world because at the moment we are irrelevant
- Group member committed Anglican, married to same-sex marriage and would have dearly loved to be married in church
- Never been rejected by the Church, sad thing that secular friends don't understand why persist?
- Risk church runs becomes irrelevant to secular community
- Group member has a gay daughter, long term relationship, married last year but not in church. Doesn't feel wanted.
- Was a huge shock when daughter came out
- Friend celibate gay came out and pushed away by three people
- Conflict for gay clergy who can't perform marriage
- Older people coming to Synod - lower average age to reflect society
- Need more balanced view on Synod so would like rules to enable change at Synod
- Need younger people involved
- Women in the workplace, why show respect, don't just listen but engage
- 2019 Synod apology, what do we do with it?
- Way raised children to have open conversations but older people... answer may not be what everyone wants

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Open Space

- Want to make room for new generation by being prepared to make room for how they think
- What credibility have because of paedophilia [institutionalised sexual abuse]?
- What influence can church have in modern thinking?
- Evidence Pell in Royal Commission and response to question about way always done things... and just didn't get world had changed
- How do we honour past, modify views 2,000 years ago?
- Why we were given Holy Spirit, rethink positions
- Like arguments about women preaching, ordination
- Women's debate, remarriage, divorcee issues
- Church says situations change
- Holy Spirit works change
- One member second marriage, married in 1989 had Civil ceremony because no Anglican Church would... but later had blessing.
- Group member married divorcee – was told should tell priest
- Group member has step-daughter in gay relationship. Member accepted into Anglican church on his marriage. Step-daughter married to partner and now living in Adelaide with x2 children. Children baptised into church. Parents accepted as well. Girls at St Peter's. Also second marriage.
- Marriage book the dates of things so far back feels like that is in the dark ages.
- Do we judge people at all? Why do we discriminate? Don't have right to discriminate against people.
- Workplace worked with gay people who were the nicest people... what made this person decide simply to accept or class as different person?
- Preamble to book – Anglican Church in Canada, USA, Scotland, New Zealand.
- Pope back-tracked. Interesting.
- As others allowing it then we should move forward.
- In England, churches can choose whether can conduct gay service except Church of England
- Imagine because Church in England decide can marry SSM then law would change
- Relevance is hard work and is subjective – takes energy, effort and hard work. Who are you trying to be relevant to?
- Worth effort to be relevant to meet people where they are at, to find common ground.
- I don't define my community be being gay or who or what I am. That is the risk for young people for use of alphabet soup tends to stigmatise and categorise who they are.
- Group member with multiple teenage children for whom this is just not an issue. They go to school with kids who have parents in SSM and they and friends talk about and make decisions about sexuality. Come to church and what is an issue for them becomes an issue. About generational change – not respected for having views on all things.
- Children should ask questions and tragedy if any part of our society doesn't listen
- Same-sex couples at year 12 formal event
- Church needs a 'product' young people that can connect with
- Takes an enormous amount of work and exegesis to make relevant to young people

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Open Space

- Schools now and experience of youth is a mix of cultures
- Discrimination / race / gender at schools not an issue now
- As soon as you put a face on it, a human face on it, then prejudice or judgement disappeared.
- Jesus worked in the people, just as they were
- Jesus worked in the people of the day
- Is it an issue that we just want to put people in boxes just want to make the decision just black and white?
- We tend to hang out with people which are similar
- Gay scene – image of people in leather in a bar but it’s just not like that!
- People there to be a good Christian
- Like stigmatising of all black people as gang members
- What I am hearing we have a lot of work to be relevant to the grandkids so they don’t see as a tired old irrelevant organisation.

Time met: 10.20am

Space used: E

Topic: The Anglican Church is a communion of people with many different views and preferences – our first task is to seek ways that honour each other and keep the family of Christ together – no winners or losers

Conversation convened by: Helen Wright

Discussion points:

- Our conversations must be transparent
- All decisions must include mutual respect for all, including practical provisions and must be accepted by all – we lovingly work with it
- No splinter groups, no dominating, bullying
- We must seek ways for inclusion
- We need to find strategies to vary the current (same sex blessings) and possible future... to be acceptable to both gay and non gay/pro and anti same sex marriage
- Appellate Tribunal of Australia
- With so much diversity, how do we live in Christian harmony?

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Open Space

Time met: 10.20am

Space used: K

Topic: When does the Church consider that the call to holiness may require a stand that is not contrary to scripture?

Conversation convened by: Estelle Salagaras

Discussion points:

It is about holiness. What does holiness look like?

- Made in his image
- Faithfulness. Faithful to God's

How are we different to the world?

- Difficult to change God's word
- We are not of the world but in the world

Scripture constant in a changing world.

Women priests not the same issue as same sex marriage/blessing

How do we keep to God's standard of holiness? God loved, and calls people to make the change and be constantly refined – Romans 1. The danger of free will.

Need God's help to stay holy.

Agape love – to love sacrificially. God first loved me

Why ask for blessing when it is not a blessing?

Why celebrate something you don't believe in?

The same as two non-Christians getting married in a church. Why, when they don't believe?

If made in God's image we are required to live life according to God's design.

Definition of marriage. Can it include unholy desire as God has designed for marriage?

Striving for the beauty of holiness which is God pleasing.

One group member paraphrased Romans to equate homosexuality to paedophilia. Two members of the group strongly objected to and rejected this equation.

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Open Space

Session Two

Open Space Group Report

20 March 2021

Time met: 11.15am

Space used: C

Topic: The Australian Anglican Church constitution and connection to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer

Conversation convened by: Catherine Freriks

Discussion points:

1662 BCP. What is understood now is different to then. Is this where we need to see changes? Connection between BCP and Constitution.

Australian context freedom of Christian religions. Frustration. Compare Referendum to change our constitution – how can we work with something that is so far back. Man made rules.

Is the BCP a guide – a cornerstone/anchor. Scriptural before Plebiscite General Synod 2017.

Doctrine Commission Essays. Now in gap between secular laws and our constitution.

Discussion of historical process.

Section 4 of constitution is linked to BCP in the matter of marriage Michael Stead's Essay.

If we go slowly we can all go together. Keep as much good will.

We have an ageing church which is ongoing – the gap between with young people suggests a pressure.

BCP for some people is also a living document – still valuable and ongoing in interpretation – ref how you read eg Matthew A.

There is a clear ability/option to bless the SS union.

Appellate tribunal November 2020 General Synod can pass a canon.

Priests will have a conscience choice.

Change is difficult. There is a history of split with social change.

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Open Space

What can we bless? What does s blessing actually mean?

Define blessing to help our understanding.

Want full understanding at next Synod – about what powers it has and or diocese.

What was the BCP goal? For when people became literate around “order” and “control” of Priests and Laity.

What we should try to understand.

Michael Stead has strong and powerful truths.

Book of Psalms. God judges people with equity (Ps 96) (not you).

Time met: 11.15am

Space used: E

Topic: How does the book of essays help us share in God’s mission/vision?

Conversation convened by: Howard Harris

Discussion points:

Introduction-

- Book set up adversarial(ly)
 - Debating form
 - Seemed more a PR document – toed the party line?
 - Can we trust our translations?
 - Lack of coherent arguments across the whole of the Bible from the beginning to end including fall
 - Marriage vs blessing???? - are they the same?
 - We do need to know how to live
 - Blessing – does the scripture prohibit same sex behaviour?
 - Friendship chapters helpful in highlighting
 - Book writers seem too constrained, and ideas could be built on and developed more
 - The book was academic debate and few people are persuaded by argument – stories and narrative change minds
 - The argument case makes heavy use of historic Anglicanism in a way that the ‘for’ case could not
-

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Open Space

Time met: 11.15am

Space used: J

Topic: Pastoral care for people... How should the church care pastorally for people who have identity and relationship problems?

Conversation convened by: David Phillips

Discussion points:

How should the Church care for people of whom have identity and relationship problems.

We live in a world where there are so many differing points of view eg pornography, adulterous relationships.

Many different sexual temptations. How does church inform them they are doing something contrary to Church's view?

We need to deal with all forms of addictions eg gambling and drugs.

Pastoral care is a neighbourly thing to do, not to pre judge because of someone's addiction.

A loved member of the Church.

Temptations, lifestyles, desires and behaviours are common to all of us. Some are more destructive than others.

Pastoral care deals with all abundance of problems not all sexual. Those who are wrestling with other issues.

Needs to be repentance, and a good Church can relay this in a right way.

God's love never stops, unconditional love.

We're on this earth for a minuscule time, so we need to share God's love.

Church much preach Gospel in its entirety. It's a concern what Blessing might mean to individuals and couples having this blessing.

Are we portraying wrong information re eternal life?

Allow God and nature to allow to come to right conclusion for them.

Our love for the individuals is still the same.

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Open Space

Distinguish between same sex attraction (a temptation) and same sex sexual activities. Scripture talks about homosexual behaviour, not the temptation.

Same sex attraction, can be celibate.

Change in youth as homosexual, later in life heterosexual. There is a huge rate of sexual attraction change.

Life experiences can change a person's lifestyle from homosexual to heterosexual. Changed through God's love. This needs to be recognised pastorally.

Find a new model in assessing situation, as in past, we had knowledge of goings on, but kept under covers.

In Jesus' time, there was no need to deal with contraception and someone's sexuality, how society has dealt with the constraints over time has changed.

World of early Church not so much different as to now, just that they handled problems differently.

History hasn't changed and God hasn't either.

Liking people for their modelling roles in your life.

Putting people in boxes. Need to show what a healthy social life looks like.

Forced characterisation. Accept people for who they are, not what they are. A pressure for people to conform to how they appear, feel.

How do we pastorally care for families as they accept their young person's decisions? Honour and respect your relationships with them.

Gender dysphoria, social media contagion.

People are afraid still of voicing their preferences due to judgement from others, be accepting of people. Reach out to those who we don't understand.

Time met: 11.15am

Space used: K

Topic: How might we discern God's will and purpose for marriage

Conversation convened by: Sandy Mitchell

Discussion points:

- As Christians we want to be faithful – how do we discern God's will
- Seeking guidance from clergy – opinions polarized
- Is it a question that we are 'behind the world'
- Do not conform to the world – be transformed
- Creation – design – male/female to become one – is this compromised
- Should we include all relationships
- Division in the church – we are going to see people disassociate themselves from the Anglican Church if the nature of marriage changes
- Does the Holy Spirit provide us with updates to change
- Ordination of women – marriage of divorced people, how dividing were these issues
- Marriage – between a man and a woman – male and female created to be one in marriage
- Marriage – 2 people who love each other and love God??
- Evidence from own examples in living given
- Did God make a mistake when he created male and female?
- If only those who procreate are married – why should gender matter?
- Romans – if homosexuality is spoken against in Old and New Testament – why is it there?
- How do you interpret – church being the bride
- We've moved on with values – evolved – love is the same – all loved – Jesus turned things upside down – Jesus – love at the margins saddened by those excluded – why is there a fixation on difference – love is all inclusive
- If Jesus is who he says he is – why does he reinforce the marriage of Genesis
- I don't think God does change
- Desire to operate out of conscience
- Marriage – is there another way to acknowledge relationships – term often used loosely in the community
- Difference between secular marriage and holy matrimony
- If Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery – go and sin no more – does this matter?
- Where do I go for guidance? Ministers? Scripture? Own perspective?
- Spirit of the law – rather than the letter of the law – Jesus illustrated what he said
- Scripture – written by men – inspired by the Holy Spirit – 50-80 years after the death of Christ.
- Why can't we consider recent revelations?
- Maybe we have forgotten how to listen to God
- We are here now – 21st Century – spirit of Christ with us - 'love' in all its forms

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Open Space

- Wider community acceptance – why isn't it in the Church in the world – why 'gender' defined
 - Authority of scripture – many countries wrestling with it – resulting in division in the church – maybe we will end up that way.
 - Jesus's desire that we will be one -
 - Is it possible to hold both views and still be one
 - Sticking to what the Bible says – oral + written
-

Session Three

Open Space Group Report

20 March 2021

Time met: 12.10pm

Space used: A

Topic: How does the Appellate Tribunal finding impact on the practical issues for Dioceses?

Conversation convened by: Ann Nadge

Discussion points:

- Issues at General Synod 2017. Need to know more
- Motion for Doctrine Commission to study and write book
- Appellate Tribunal
- Wangaratta Diocese wanted to test legality, sought legal decision, blessed same sex marriage, after plebiscite. Went to Appellate Tribunal which sought wide opinion.
- Tribunal ruled in November 2020 that any Diocese can decide on – and Minister – may use a form of blessing
- What are the practical implications of this – for the church, for those blessed, for society?
- What for the Diocese? Does Adelaide yet have a blessing service. Each diocese can endorse a form of blessing.
- What is a blessing, what does it mean?
- How can we vote on it without a real understanding of what a blessing is?
- Church (is) a depressing place for many
- Those with a civil union seeking a blessing would mostly be committed Christians
- A role for doctrine if committed Christians want this.
- In many European countries, weddings are civil services which may be followed by a church service or blessing.
- Equity of a civil service followed by a blessing is still 2nd best but may be an expression of hope for the future. A step in the process.

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Open Space

Practical issues

- Preparation of a service for consideration of Synod
- Complexities – legal etc. How to get our head around so can vote properly
- Need a short discussion paper on history of the process
- Christian marriage taken from Jewish rites and attitudes towards marriage vary greatly between countries but in Australia separation between church and state.

General?

- What ways can laity be prepared for Synod?

Time met: 12.10pm

Space used: B

Topic: What thoughts does this group have about the next conversation – where to after this?

Conversation convened by: Katherine Dellit

Discussion points:

Have a second conversation proposed, what should that look like?

Why aren't the clergy here? Told that we would be bullied but don't believe that because we can stand up.

Not sure clergy should be locked up.

Nothing in Synod that says for Synod reps only.

What is the end?

- Consulting process?
- End process?

Where is it all headed? Is it headed to a vote?

Is the purpose to have a conversation?

Every other country/place aware of has the same outcome – lot of blood spilt or we have something different and some leadership as to what that might look like.

Sometimes I feel

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Open Space

- Anglican Church has such diverse issues on this how do we present ourselves.

One member says has found calm church.

Anglican Church can agree to differ on issues why can't we agree on this.

Smaller groups

We want to hear what other people say to broader group.

Perhaps next step is to have smaller groups of both clergy and laity.

Calmness of today and this process so supporting of process of this calmness but brought clergy and laity together.

Better if both sides are talking together.

What is any amount of conversation about this going to achieve? To what extent is discussion going to alter people's views.

Public of which church members are a part through plebiscite have had plenty of time to think about it to form a view. More time than given to women's ordination.

Split church – happened ordination of women.

Drop off rate attending church in last 50 years is huge.

- Seen as having little relevance
- Needs to speak into peoples' lives and start walking with feet.

Sport on Sundays, so society has affected the church.

Talking to the world, talking here is practice so if we can't be

Have to be very measured.

Grateful no clergy today because I would not have opened my mouth.

Needs a skilful facilitator to enable people to express opinions.

Because we are members of Synod already means that we are valued by the church.

Good arguments for using this process again.

This process which equalises and helps to have a conversation.

Circle makes it less authoritarian.

Synod not right forum for these conversations.

Terrifying/daunting standing up at Synod.

Want people to have a conversation.

Share amongst groups.

Who should be in the room is about outcome

- If pre dating decision, the Synod
- If about educating, then wider group
- ? If broader invitation then who would come?
- Lots of Synod groups not here
- What about the youth
- I think a youth 'council' synod conversation would be great
- Safely ascertain if other people interested in being married to same sex partner and invite if they wish to participate
- Really important to hear more from other people in Church affected by the Church
- Couple in Church whose son married to his male partner but have been careful with who they tell in the church
- Clergy friends attend civil marriage in clerical collars

- The hearing from people's lived experience and debate between the doctrine/theory is important to have and to hear those stories.

Time met: 12.10pm

Space used: C

Topic: The Anglican Church needs to show respect for all people without discrimination

Conversation convened by: Phil Kernick

Discussion points:

What is respect?

How does it affect people already attending church?

How are peoples' lives affected by discrimination?

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Open Space

Changes in an ongoing society – It seems that most younger people are not concerned about different are not concerned about different people, religious beliefs.

Health – woven throughout the community – discrimination Gender

Matthew Anstey – Church is di????

Michael Stead

Value of

Marriage is full of love – not showing favour to the mix of the couple – does this impose on the heterosexual couples already married with love?

Respecting for all – as through the eyes of a child.

There are differences recognised but to discrimination.

Our Church needs to concentrate on love and welcome all.

Time met: 12.10pm

Space used: D

Topic: The book of essays highlighted a variety of approaches to reading and understanding the scriptures. What did you think of them?

Conversation convened by: David Purton

Discussion points:

- Lots of different ways of reading Bible – leads them to different conclusions
- There is a distinction between knowing God’s will and following the culture around
- It seems that you can read into the Bible whatever you want
- Trust in what the Bible says
- Are we listening to what God is saying or following society
- There wouldn’t be an issue if everyone felt the scriptures were sufficiently clear

Time met: 12.10pm

Space used: E

Topic: God judges – we are commanded to love one another (our neighbour), not to judge

Conversation convened by: Helen Wright

Discussion points:

- We are not to play God
 - God will hold us accountable
 - God's Just "wrath" (John)
 - He is the only one who is righteous
 - The path is narrow that leads to righteousness
 - What is righteousness?
 - Jesus is the gate – and the only way – Jesus' love, compassion and inclusivity
 - Don't judge/don't make assumptions
 - How do we approach others with different standards?
 - With humility and awareness of all have sinned and fallen short.
 - We need to gently share our thoughts and find God's way, not ours
-

Time met: 12.10pm

Space used: J

Topic: In what ways can we learn from Jesus' response to those who were living contrary to God's design/laws?

Conversation convened by: Estelle Salagaras

Discussion points:

- Love – 3 types (sexual) eros, brotherly, agape means general love for others
 - Argument that Jesus was gay because he loved his disciples – example of ignorance that there is one type of love
 - Lady who was an adulterer was not stoned as per letter of law, Jesus corrected her lifestyle and asked her to sin no more
 - Love is unconditional, but there are boundaries
-

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Open Space

Time met: 12.10pm

Space used: K

Topic: How does the Adelaide Diocese manage conflict between a parish priest and their congregation - post Synod decision?

Conversation convened by: Don Palmer

Discussion points:

1. Irrespective of what Synod & General Synod vote, we will lose (or possibly gain) parishioners.
2. There can be cultural differences between priest and congregation
3. Regardless, there will be priests who resign or who dig heels in to detriment of church
4. Need to be aware that debate 2019 – totally polarised.
5. Worried re splinter of the church. How do we manage in the meantime?
6. We are worried re priests may not be able to go home to their own country if we vote Yes.
7. Has great possibility of antagonism between priest and congregation.
8. Need priests who are pastorally minded, non-judgemental to provide caring support for all.
9. Need strong Wardens and other leaders (elders) representing the people.
10. What if General Synod allows different parishes make more local decisions?
11. Need priests who are multiskilled

Summary

12. Significant issues that diocese needs to be prepared for the outcome

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Open Space

Closing Circle Reflections

20 March 2021

1320

Participants were asked to reflect and complete the sentence 'As I have been in dialogue, I been noticing...' or '.... I have been surprised by...'

- People's ability to speak on how they felt and to be transparent with these feelings
- Everybody in the group got a go, doesn't happen often
- Purposeful calmness in the building
- Real depth in the knowledge that was shared
- How much I had to say!
- How genuinely concerned people were about the issue
- Pass
- Not qualified to make the leap of faith and to make a decision
- How everyone respected each other, no-one spoke over each other
- How open it was and the willingness to understand each other
- We tended to focus on what knowledge we had or what we cared about, so much more to talk about
- People's willingness to be open and brave in their disclosures, and people were willing to listen, it was warming
- The expectation how polarised views would never meet, and lead to schism. I was surprised how the interpretation of scripture was very fluid, instead of one point. How much do the goalposts move? Where is the basis of faith to transmit a common faith
- Not inclusive and divisive, if there are polarised views, can we share the same faith? It is concerning
- Openness between people, realised that there was no one there who did not want to find a solution
- Noticed and appreciated the fact that we could share what we thought, we could disagree without being adversarial
- Openness and respectful conversations; there will be conflict within churches and within each individual parish
- Everyone had an opinion, very thoughtful opinions
- I arrived late, expected heated discussions, I was amazed at the peace and respect for each other
- Really great and wonderful
- Open dialogue and compassion for each other
- Felt calmness, movement of the holy spirit
- Thank you Bronwyn!
- Openness and preparedness to listen to each other. Was relaxed and calm but sad at the differences
- Concur with what has been said, you all are showing that you are the leadership of this Diocese
- Heartened at how we can relate to each other
- Agree at the willingness to share and willingness to listen – shows the complexity of the issue – it is far from binary
- Respect shown by everybody, there was total respect
- Similar cultural backgrounds of everyone here

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- Great engagement, better than I expected in terms of context and rapport. Surprised at the still entrenched views, and the breadth of the views held
- Difficult to be able to say, people were really listening to each other, an openness to ideas
- Not surprised at the variety/ perspectives brought to this subject. Think the analogy of one group wanting to play cricket, the other group wants to play football – how do you play on the same ground at the same time?
- Does not matter if you win or lose, but how you play the game

1345

Action planning for 15 minutes

1413

Action planning and discussion

Consideration: I need to know what rules (i.e, scripture) to base on?

Who to talk to about this further?

1440

Action plans announced

1445

Question - what do we do with all this? Synod requested two meetings on this topic. What do you suggest the Diocesan Council take into account to plan the next one?

- Meeting with clergy in a joint session?
- Break up straight away into smaller groups, not like Synod
- Having just a forum with laity alone would be better, keep it separate. Laity often are or feel intimidated by clergy
- Identify some specific issues to discuss next time, i.e. authority of scripture, what/why and purpose of marriage?
- Smaller pre-readings instead. The pre-read provided was too long
- Need this group to get together again – another laity day but with a wider conversation with clergy perhaps in the future
- As a Diocesan Council member, I would rather hear what everyone says. Laity has an extremely important part to play in this question, we should reflect our congregations come Synod
- If we are serious about today, our voices should be reflected in Synod
- Lay and clergy pitted against each other – concerned about the statement about laity being sent off by themselves because clergy will intimidate us. I think that is offensive, we can stand up for ourselves.
- At Synod, who chooses who will speak?
- Clergy might be able to see how laity feel, after all they're human beings. Doing things separately creates factions
- Helpful coming in today, another meeting with a little more direction in the invite
- More focussed conversations next time
- This issue has played out elsewhere in the world, different options should be put on the table. Failing to plan is planning to fail

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- Have this forum before Synod, then put up the options
- The church in USA and Canada have been haemorrhaging people because of this issue, we need to take a different approach lest we go the way of North America. We need to get it right
- Need to know what to do next time, we have to go with God
- Having division between clergy and laity saddens clergy, in losing congregants. Clergy are also concerned about inadvertently falling foul of the rules in the future
- Pitting laity against clergy is destructive; numbers aren't always right
- We are elected as Synod representatives – we have a duty to talk to parishioners. It will not be easy
- Strengthen the lay voice, is important to be seen from our perspective
- This place was very safe – I would rather continue this without the clergy present. also, send topics in advance so as to prepare
- Issue of readiness and timing with a joint forum with clergy and laity. To have a clear timeline of the past two years as the papers came out before the decision of the Appellate Tribunal
- Shows how diverse the issues and topics are on this.
- This environment is more conducive to open productive conversations than Synod
- This is a more practical format for working things through than Synod. Synod more procedural
- Want a third forum with clergy included
- Single out more significant issues that came out from today. Laity need to be brave enough to tell clergy how they feel. They need to be aware of how we feel in order to have Christ like conversations
- If a joint forum, having an outside moderator between clergy and laity – could we have more Bronwyns?
- Good venue, but a more centralised location would be preferable
- Microphones next time
- Length of time
- Roving microphone next time
- Endorse the process and in having an external facilitator
- Thanks to Salisbury
- Thanks to Bronwyn

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Open Space

Action Plans

Action Plan 1

Focus Area for Action: Scripture – fixed or fluid? Implications for decision-making to honour God

Convened by: Estelle Salagaras

Offer of support (names / contact details): Linda Dillon

Immediate Next Step/s:

- What position does /is the role of scripture (prayer book) in decision making in the Anglican Church of Australia

Person responsible for making sure the first step happens:

By when:

Action Plan 2

Focus Area for Action: Read the Bible together with a more diverse group from Synod on this issue.

Convened by: David Purton

Offer of support (names / contact details): Lyn Thurston

Immediate Next Step/s:

- Include other Synod reps from my parish
- Invite anyone interested to contact me david.purton@fes.org.au

Person responsible for making sure the first step happens:

By when:

Action Plan 3

Focus Area for Action: Theological Education for Laity viz. SBC start course information

Convened by: Angela Evans

Facilitated by:

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Offer of support (names / contact details): Ann Nadge, Sandy Mitchell, Katy Phillips, Susan Bishop

Immediate Next Step/s:

- Ask CT the possibility of lay version of “God and Humanity” subject
- LEMU is in process planning lay education experiences eg study group
- “KISS” version of essays -> parishes
- Online access to above

Person responsible for making sure the first step happens: All – Coffee

By when: Before Easter

Action Plan 4

Focus Area for Action: Parish Discussion about today – report

Convened by: Katherine Dellit – happy to chat with anyone who wants to do this in their parish : kmdellit@gmail.com

Offer of support (names / contact details):

Immediate Next Step/s:

- Katherine to host a come and chat with me with tea and coffee for Woodville parishioners to report back on today and to make book of proceedings available (also to make book of proceedings available to those who don’t want to discuss). Katherine will listen to the conversation of the parishioners.

Person responsible for making sure the first step happens: Katherine Dellit

By when: After Easter (not more than 6 weeks)
