



Tuesday 3 April 2018

FCANZ response to the Motion 29 Working Group Final Report

This is the formal response to the Motion 29 Working Group Final Report and Recommendations. The Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans New Zealand (FCANZ) is thankful for the opportunities the Working Group has provided the Province to offer feedback, and to some extent shape the final recommendations included within the report.

The Working Group spent significant time engaging with numerous individuals and groups from across our Province in order that it better understood their concerns. It has led to a document that clearly seeks compromise between those on either side of the debate. For its approach, its willingness to understand, and its genuine efforts we are thankful.

Notwithstanding the above, FCANZ is convinced that in some areas the recommendations go too far and in other areas the recommendations do not go far enough.

Too far

The proposal to allow authorized services that are inconsistent with the Formularies of our church will result in changes to the church's doctrine and practice regarding sexual relationships. It will allow for the blessing of not only homosexual couples, but also heterosexual couples who are not married. This will cause significant problems for the consciences of many who minister, serve, and participate in the life of our church. They will be required to declare their obedience to rules and regulations which contradict the teaching of Scripture and the historical practice of the Christian church. There will be many who will not be able to sign due obedience to these new canons and will therefore be unable to retain episcopal licenses. By allowing for the authorized introduction of such doctrine and practice, this church risks losing many faithful men and women, both lay and ordained.

Not far enough

Even for those who do feel that they can stay within a denomination which has introduced such doctrine and practice, the recommendations fail to provide structural safeguards for those within our church who hold differing theological convictions on this matter from their diocesan bishop.

The Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans was clear in all of its submissions that any departure from the current doctrine and practice of our church was inappropriate and would prove to be a step too far for some. We were unconvinced that two theological integrities could exist within the same ecclesial structure, and therefore our initial submission suggested that the creation of an Extra Provincial Diocese was the best way forward. This was deemed to exceed the Working Group's terms of reference who instead suggested the creation of Christian Communities. Seeking to work with the process as far as possible, our submission on the interim report was that the kind of **additional episcopal support** envisaged by these Christian Communities would be insufficient to address the very significant issues raised by the introduction of practices currently contrary to the belief and practice of the Anglican Church. Our position was that, for the recommendations to be workable, some form of **Alternative Episcopal Oversight** was the minimum required. The Working Group's inability to incorporate this is deeply disappointing.

This is because it leaves the most vulnerable without structural safeguards and protections if they belong to a diocese where the bishop allows or forbids a practice that goes against their conviction. Clergy or churches seeking to bless same-sex relationships in a diocese where their bishop will not allow it cannot express their conviction without facing potential discipline. Similarly, in dioceses where bishops allow the teaching and practice of what orthodox clergy and churches deem against their conviction, impaired episcopal relationships would exist with no structural protection or safeguard. Christian Communities fail to provide safeguards or protections in either of these scenarios.

The Final Report calls for the church to trust its bishops to relationally handle any disputes which may occur within their dioceses, stating that *"the WG's approach has always been to recognise the importance and maintenance of pastoral relationships in an amorangi or diocese as a pivotal means of safeguarding all who have differing theological opinions"*.¹ We agree that relationships are of utmost importance, but the mandate set before the Working Group was to provide **structures** that would safeguard different theological convictions. The example of Rev. Michael Hewat and the Parish of West Hamilton in 2014 shows that relational solutions were not enough, and with no structural safeguards available, their licenses were lost and they found themselves outside of the Province. This shows that structures must be present to safeguard theological convictions, and the Working Group has failed in its mandate by not providing such structures.

We recognize that the issue of Alternative Episcopal Oversight is complicated and difficult but in this case some form of it is a non-negotiable essential. The difficulties must be worked through and resolved. On a matter that presents such deep issues of conscience there must be the possibility of receiving episcopal oversight and protection from an alternative bishop who will safeguard that particular conviction.

The Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans has engaged fully and in good faith throughout the Motion 29 Working Group process. But, we repeat, if General Synod adopts recommendations allowing authorized services which contradict our existing doctrine and practice, many Anglicans

¹ *Final Report of the Motion 29 Working Group*, 22 January 2018, p4.

will have been abandoned by their denomination and will have no alternative but to seek other ways of remaining authentically Anglican. If General Synod adopts the Motion 29 Recommendations as they stand, without a sufficiently robust form of Alternative Episcopal Oversight, it will be a betrayal of the good faith exhibited at General Synod 2016 and a clear declaration that those who maintain the church's current doctrine and practice are no longer safe in this church.

We repeat our plea for an Extra Provincial Diocese to be established. This would allow the two convictions to exist within different structures and would allow that process to be done as patiently, kindly, and generously as possible. Rather than the kind of splits and legal disputes that have occurred in other Anglican provinces that have gone down this road, the creation of an Extra Provincial Diocese, done collaboratively and with goodwill, would endorse the gospel of the Lord Jesus rather than bring it into disrepute. The Report states that in its opinion General Synod does not have the authority or mandate to implement this option. We would contend that we have already seen this kind of imagination and resourcefulness in the establishment of our Three Tikanga church, and we now have the opportunity to offer hope and a way forward not only to Anglicans of our Province but the wider Communion.

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