



ANGLICANSTOGETHER

S Y D N E Y

President's Report

AGM 2021

If it seems a while since we had our last Anglicans Together AGM – you'd be right! Due to COVID-19 restrictions and temporary reporting arrangements for organisations such as ours, our last AGM was held over two years ago in August 2019. At that meeting we elected an Executive Committee comprising:

- The Reverend Dr Max Wood (President);
- Mrs Susan Hooke (Vice President);
- Mr Wesley Fairhall (Treasurer and Public Officer);
- Mrs Paula Turner (Secretary);
- The Reverend Michael Armstrong;
- Ms Lyn Bannerman; and,
- Ms Steff Fenton.

Subsequent to the 2019 AGM the Executive Committee also co-opted the following additional members:

- Mrs Moya Holle;
- Mr Christopher Waterhouse, and
- Mr Callum Close.

In the intervening period, Mrs Moya Holle, Ms Steff Fenton, and Mr Christopher Waterhouse have resigned from the Committee.

On behalf of all members of Anglicans Together I would like to sincerely thank all who have generously served upon our Executive Committee. And I would like to particularly note the contribution that Mrs Moya Holle has made over many years, particularly as editor of our newsletter.

Our new Executive Committee was barely a few weeks in office before the first of the two major issues (apart from COVID-19) which have dominated Sydney and National Anglican politics since our last AGM raised its head, namely, the decision by the Synod of the Diocese of Wangaratta to approve a liturgy to bless marriages (irrespective of the genders of the couple) conducted under the *Marriage Act*. In response to this, the Committee issued the following statement:

A Statement from Anglicans Together

“Unity in Diversity”

13 September 2019

Anglicans Together is an organisation that celebrates the depth and breadth of Anglicanism. As such, our membership reflects a diverse range of views and positions.

What we value most is our common faith, and the unity that comes through such faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe there is more that unifies us than separates us, and that we are better as Anglicans together!

We pray that such a desire to be one, as our Lord Jesus Christ prayed, might be also the prayer and desire of others across the Anglican Church of Australia, especially at this time.

In light of what has occurred in Wangaratta Diocese, and as we await the Appellate Tribunal determination, we support the Primate’s calls for our Bishops to meet together. We hope that in doing so they will have the opportunity to seek our Lord’s wisdom, have further dialogue with generous hearts, and pray together. We pray too, that any actions that might provoke further divisions at this time be avoided and restraint exercised until good conversations have occurred, and outcomes determined.

We call upon all our members, lay and ordained, to pray for our church at this time, especially holding all of our Bishops in our prayers as they seek to communicate with one another, and with hope, we pray that deeper unity might come, rather than discord. We acknowledge that this is never easy, hence why we hold them especially before our Lord.

The matter was then considered by the Appellate Tribunal and in its November 2020 decision the majority opinion (5-1) held that: *“Wangaratta Diocese’s proposed service for the blessing of persons married in accordance with the Marriage Act does not entail the solemnisation of marriage; is authorised by the Canon Concerning Services 1992; and is not inconsistent with the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling Principles of the Constitution of the Church.”*

As was subsequently reported, this decision was welcomed by supporters of the blessing of same-sex marriages and strongly criticised by opponents. Our own Diocesan Standing Committee, for example, unanimously passed the following Motion: *“Standing Committee of the Diocese of Sydney entirely rejects the recently released majority opinion of the General Synod Appellate Tribunal. We stand with brothers and sisters all over the world who have resisted the attempt to bless what God does not bless and to ignore the teaching of Scripture on the extreme danger of the behaviour endorsed by the proposed services of blessing. We are deeply saddened that the delivery of this opinion further disturbs the hard-won unity of the church.”*

And in the most recent edition of *Via Media*, we noted that things have “hotted up” with regards to this issue with the announcement by Gafcon Australia in July that it proposes to establish a new allegedly Anglican church entity in Australia outside of the Anglican Church of Australia for individual parishioners, parishes and possibly dioceses that oppose the blessing of same-sex marriages. It will be intriguing to observe the fall-out from this announcement and the actions of Dioceses authorising same-sex marriage blessings over coming Diocesan Synods and the General Synod which is scheduled to be held in May 2022 on the Gold Coast.

The second major issue which has dominated Sydney Diocesan politics since our last AGM concerns Synod, and in particular, the convincing election of Kanishka Raffel, former Dean of St Andrew’s Cathedral, as the 10th Archbishop of Sydney in early May this year. In anticipation of the election synod we hosted a well-attended and informative pre-synod meeting in April. At the meeting the potential strengths of the four candidates were considered at length.

Although Diocesan Synod did not meet in person in 2020, it was nonetheless a Synod election year. There were contested elections for a number of important positions and Committee Members were nominated in several of these elections, specifically:

<u>Election Name</u>	<u>Anglicans Together Member Candidate(s)</u>
Anglican Church Property Trust Diocese of Sydney	The Rev Dr Max Wood
Diocesan Representatives of General Synod (Clergy)	The Rev Michael Armstrong The Rev Dr Max Wood
Diocesan Representatives of General Synod (Lay persons)	Ms Lynette Bannerman Mrs Susan Hooke
Standing Committee Persons Elected by the Northern Region (Holy Orders)	The Rev Dr Max Wood
Standing Committee Persons Elected by the Northern Region (Parishioners)	Mrs Susan Hooke

Regrettably none of our candidates were successful in the contested elections, although, the President and the Reverend Michael Armstrong were elected unopposed to the Northern Regional Council.

Since our last AGM we have attempted to organise an Anglicans Together Eucharist and Lunch/Dinner however we were thwarted by COVID-19 lockdowns. Hopefully the New Year will bring greater success in hosting these important events.

The Reverend Dr Max Wood
President