

The Link

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF ARMIDALE

2022 JUNE/JULY

What have we got here?

The Reverend Bernard Gabbott

IN MAY 2022, THE EIGHTEENTH GENERAL SYNOD OF THE Anglican Church of Australia (GS) gathered. This was the first time such a Synod had gathered since 2017 – and much had happened across Australia, and across Australian Anglicanism, since that time. You might have heard of the proceedings. You might be scratching your head about the proceedings. You might be wondering, ‘How did we get here? And what just happened?’

The aim of this article is to simply and clearly explain what happened, and the events that brought us to this point. It will be simple, but probably not exhaustive. Let me encourage you to chat with your Vicar, your Bishop, or even give me a tingle, if further clarity is needed.

Constructs

An understanding of the construction of the Anglican Church of Australia is helpful in understanding the scope and impact of General Synod.

The Anglican Church of Australia was established in 1962 as an ‘autocephalous’ communion – it was no longer the ‘Church of England in Australia’ but its own communion, with a Constitution which governed its structures, and stated its doctrine clearly. This doctrine is summarised in the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer. This is encapsulated in the Constitution in ‘The Fundamental Declarations’ and the ‘The Ruling Principles’. The communion officially became ‘The Anglican Church of Australia’ (ACA) in the early 1980s.

As a communion, the ACA is divided into 23 Dioceses. In essence, these are largely autonomous administrative units that oversee and support local parishes in a set geographical area. Each Diocese is led by a Bishop. In the case of the ‘metropolitan’ Dioceses (Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane), the Diocese is led by an Archbishop, who oversees not only their Diocese but the ‘Province’ (a loose organisation of Dioceses, largely similar to our states).

Each Diocese is its own entity. They have their own Synod – like a parliament. This Synod makes decisions for that Diocese, passing ‘Ordinances’ (laws that govern the Diocese), ‘Motions’ (decisions and statements), and facilitating ministry across that Diocese. The

Synod meets annually, with representatives from each parish, and ordained ministers. In between, a ‘Synod-in-council’ (in our Diocese, ‘Diocesan Council’) meets to make decisions. This is an elected/appointed body made up of both clergy and lay people.

The ACA has its own Synod – the General Synod (GS). This meets every three years, with a similar construction to our Diocesan Synod – there are representatives from each Diocese, from lay people, clergy and Bishops. GS meets to make decisions for the national communion, to hear reports, to debate motions and laws, and to represent the national communion. Voting is the same as our Diocesan Synod – either generally, or in Houses (lay, clergy, Bishops). And GS has its own version of our Diocesan Council – the Standing Committee – which meets between GS gatherings to make decisions.

It is important to remember five facts:

First, simply, the decisions of the GS are not binding on Dioceses, UNTIL that Diocese passes that decision as its own law.

Second, any church law disputes are heard by the Appellate Tribunal, which is a body elected by the GS each time it meets.

Third, doctrinal questions at a national level are often referred to the Doctrine Commission (elected by the GS) which will issue opinions.

Fourth, the representatives for GS are voted for by each Diocesan Synod, and there is a formula embedded in the Constitution to decide numbers for each Diocese.

Fifth, the Constitution of the ACA is very, very hard to change – similar in many ways to the way it is very hard to change the Constitution of Australia!

Context

The context for the current GS meeting is large and extensive, but it is important to understand the historical events that have brought us to this moment – both globally and nationally. As we consider that, remember that the ACA is an Anglican communion in relationship with similar Anglican communions right across the world – and they are all similarly autonomous.

Globally, the catalyst for the situation we now find ourselves in has been the discussion of human sexuality, a discussion that

was recognized at the Lambeth Conference 1998 (the gathering of global Anglican Bishops every ten years) (through Resolution 1.10). At that point, the worldwide assembly of bishops reaffirmed the Bible's teaching on sex – marriage between a man and a woman is the God-given context for sex, and abstinence should be honoured outside marriage. The General Synod of Australia reaffirmed this Biblical definition of marriage in 2017, and the Synod of this Diocese did the same that year.

Yet, this has not been the case across the worldwide Anglican Communion. Since 2003, when The Episcopal Church (USA) consecrated a man in a same-sex relationship as a Bishop, through to The Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada both very soon afterwards moving Ordinances that allowed the blessing of same-sex unions, this Biblical doctrine has been under revision. Calls to repent have been ignored. Actions have progressed – now, the Anglican Church in at least five national provinces authorize the conducting of marriage services for same-sex unions.

This is a very significant doctrinal shift. It is a move that contravenes the clear teaching of Scripture. It is a change that is opposed to the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer. In essence, it is a presenting issue that links to the foundational issue: the clear authority of the Scriptures as God's word.

Nationally, our current situation has been influenced by these global moves, but also by national political and social changes. In September-November 2017, the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey was held. The voluntary vote revealed that 61.6% of those who voted desired reform of the Marriage Act to allow for same-sex marriage. In early December 2017, such law reform took place, and same-sex marriage was legalized in Australia. There are significant concessions for celebrants, and religious groups, who do not hold such views due to their doctrines and beliefs.

Just before this survey and law change, GS 17 met. In this gathering, there were a number of significant resolutions passed, two of which stand out: a resolution that noted 'with regret' that the Scottish Episcopal Church had changed its doctrine to allow the solemnization of same-sex marriages; a resolution that affirmed the traditional and Biblical doctrine of marriage 'as an exclusive and lifelong union of a man and a woman', and asked the Doctrine Commission to prepare a report on a whole range of issues connected with this, and same-sex marriage.

In August 2019, the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta passed a motion authorising a form of service for a church blessing for couples who are married according to the Marriage Act. This was in the immediate aftermath of the Marriage Act being amended in line with the 2017 national survey on same-sex marriage, to re-define the definition of marriage. The move by Wangaratta was seen as a move to allow the blessing by church of same-sex marriages conducted under the amended Marriage Act.

In October 2019, the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle drafted an ordinance that would remove the possibility of disciplinary action being taken against a member of the clergy married under the Marriage Act to a member of the same sex or who blessed – or declined to bless – a same-sex marriage. This draft ordinance did not become

an ordinance passed.

Both of the actions of the two Dioceses were referred to the Appellate Tribunal, the Anglican Church of Australia's highest legal authority, for an opinion.

In between these two Synods, the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Armidale met and passed a motion that affirmed our commitment to a Biblical orthodox view of marriage. We reaffirmed this motion at our Synod in 2021.

The Appellate Tribunal handed down its opinion on November 11, 2020. Its decision accepted submissions from many parts of the Australian Anglican Communion. Moreover, the Appellate Tribunal asked for the opinion of two bodies within the ACA – the House of Bishops and the Board of Assessors – in a series of four questions that explored the issue of the church's doctrine on this matter.

Both of these bodies answered unanimously, and with very clear opposition to such blessing being. To quote Robert Tong: 'The theological thrust of the reports of the bishops and assessors was that the underlying theology in the blessing service was contrary to the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling Principles of the Anglican Church of Australia'.¹

The opinion handed down by the Appellate Tribunal, in light of the opinions offered by the House of Bishops and the Board of Assessors, was a surprise: in a 5-1 majority, the Appellate Tribunal stated that the service of blessing passed by the Diocese of Wangaratta was legally valid and was not in contradiction of the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia.

The context, then, for the GS 18 debate and decisions was a shifting global doctrinal stage for the Anglican communion and a movement within the ACA to force a decision. The GS 18 meeting was to be the moment for clarity!

Content

There were a number of motions presented at GS 18 which touched on this whole context, but the key two items were 'Statements'. This is a particular provision in the Constitution – and is described like this: "statements as to the faith ritual ceremonial or discipline of this Church". 'Statements' work to clarify an issue, to make express publicly the mind of the General Synod on a particular question, to interpret a particular position in a contentious area. Such 'Statements' do not have legislative force, nor do they over-ride the decisions of a Diocesan Synod. But they do help in clarifying the position or will of the General Synod on an issue. In fact, the Appellate Tribunal made such a comment in its ruling on the blessing of marriages performed under civil law!

There were two 'Statements' placed before the GS 18.

The first Statement aimed to affirm what the GS had done in 2017, and which it had always done – to state that marriage is between one man and one woman, as a lifelong union, as the General Synod had always understood the Bible to clearly affirm, and that any service that blesses or solemnises anything else as 'marriage' is against the doctrine of the ACA (in fact, in 2004, General Synod had moved a motion that stated that it did not condone the liturgical blessing of same-sex marriages).

1 R. Tong, C. Smith, M. Leite (eds), *The Line in the Sand: the Appellate Tribunal opinion and the future of the Anglican Church in Australia.*, (Anglican Church League, Australian Church Record: 2022, Camperdown), p.6.

In essence, within a confusing and contentious environment, the Statement was affirming what the General Synod had always affirmed as Biblical truth.

The debate was clear and consistent and cordial. There was one amendment accepted by the movers (the Archbishop of Sydney moved the Statement). The voting was striking. It was decided by the Synod to vote in Houses. That means each House voted, the vote was read out, and it only moved to a vote in the next House if it passed. In the House of Laity, it was passed 63-47. In the House of Clergy, it was passed 70-39. In the House of Bishops, it was defeated 12-11 (with two abstentions)!

The second Statement aimed to clarify 'unchastity', as a phrase used within the ACA code of conduct, 'Faithfulness in Service'. It stated that 'unchastity' was any form of sexual activity outside marriage, with marriage 'defined in the *Book of Common Prayer* as the union of one man and one woman, in accordance with Jesus' teaching about marriage in Matt 19:4-5.'

Again, the debate was clear and cordial. Amendments were proposed, but not accepted. The voting was striking. It was decided by the Synod to vote in Houses. That means each House voted, the vote was read out, and it only moved to a vote in the next House if it passed. In essence, the voting followed the pattern for the first Statement, EXCEPT in the House of Bishops, where the Statement was passed, 12-10!!!

The outcome is consuming, and contradictory. On the one hand, the Statement on the doctrine of marriage was accepted by the vast majority of GS 18, being defeated by the vote of two Bishops. On the other hand, the Statement on 'unchastity' (which contained the very same definition of 'marriage' as the first Statement!) was accepted by GS, in all three Houses!

The next day of the GS 18 gathering saw a 'Petition' presented. Signed by more than half of the GS members, this 'Petition' called for prayer for, and by, the House of Bishops. The subject of this prayer was 'that all Members of the House of Bishops would clearly affirm and be united in their support for the teaching of Christ concerning marriage and the principles of marriage reflected in the *Book of Common Prayer*'. This 'Petition' was accepted and read.

Further Motions – on 'singleness', on the way in which the ACA had treated LGBTIQ+ people – helped clarify some of the areas around the two Statements. Both these Motions were passed, in similar numbers to the general vote on the Statements.

Two other Motions helped provide some further clarity.

A Motion affirming same-sex marriage as a gift from God, and an expression of love that enabled deeper understanding, was defeated in a general vote that matched the numbers of the votes on the Statements. The debate of this Motion was respectful but raw, and the issue continues to remain a significant area of feeling within the ACA.

A Motion calling for unity within the ACA, and a commitment to move forward, and away from schismatic groups, was also debated and put. A number of significant amendments were proposed, and debated. The striking conclusion was that voting on these amendments showed a far closer set of numbers than on the issues of human sexuality. Moreover, in the end, the Motion was 'not put' – a very clear statement by GS that there was much disagreement about what united us!

Consequence: clarity and confusion

So, what did happen? And, what are we left with?

First, the 'on-the-ground' consequences for our Diocese – the Anglican Diocese of Armidale – are minimal. We have affirmed our understanding of the Biblical orthodoxy on marriage, time and time again, in a number of Motions at our Diocesan Synod. We have affirmed our stance on same-sex marriage, and the blessing of such unions, in a number of Motions at our Diocesan Synod. Nothing debated, or moved, at GS 18 changes this. In this, we give thanks to God that the



Bernard Gabbott at General Synod 2022.

construction of the ACA gives us scope to hold onto Biblical truth, in the way affirmed by our Constitution and Fundamental Principles. God has given us his clear word, and we proclaim that truth as we gather and live as his people, under this denominational label.

Second, the votes on matters of human sexuality at GS 18 were quite clear, in terms of general numbers. This covers a broad spectrum of Anglicanism, but is encouraging that there is a majority orthodox and Biblical view on such matters.

Third, the vote of the House of Bishops was, and is, a matter of concern. As the Petition stated, this is a matter of urgent prayer. In God's good grace, this Diocese has been led by Bible-believing and Bible-proclaiming Bishops for many years!

Fourth, the vote – or, 'non-vote' – on the nature of our unity as Anglicans is concerning. The numbers in the votes on human sexuality issues were not mirrored in this vote. In my opinion, this reveals deeper theological issues about our unity. And this concerns me. It is a matter for prayer that we be united around the Gospel of Christ, as revealed in God's word: that Jesus lived, died and rose, for our sins, according to the Scriptures – and that forgiveness of sins, and salvation of lives, is found nowhere else!

Fifth, each Diocese will now make decisions in line with how they understand the decisions of GS 18. Already, we are seeing Dioceses, at their Synods, recognise that the decision of the Appellate Tribunal has now opened the way for the blessing of unions conducted under the Marriage Act. Our prayer is that people return to the Biblical truth affirmed a number of times, over many years, by the General Synod of the ACA: that marriage is between a man and woman, a lifelong commitment as described by our Lord and Saviour, Jesus, and as designed by our Father.

Finally, sixth, we must continue to pray, proclaim, and practice the good news of Jesus. Our King is enthroned, our brothers and sisters in other Dioceses need our prayer and support, and our friends and families need the good news!



From the bishop

Rod Chiswell

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS
in Christ,

It is a constant encouragement to me as I travel each weekend around our Diocese to see keen Christian laypeople and hardworking clergy, striving together to get on with the job of introducing all people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven. This I believe is the legacy of over 50 years of evangelical bishops recruiting Bible believing clergy who love God's people and seek to preach God's word faithfully week by week. Despite the challenges facing us in finding momentum with proactive gospel ministry post-COVID it's clear to me that we have much to thank God for. I've found, over the years, that staying thankful is crucial to perseverance. There are an infinite number of things to thank God for but choosing a few each day and thanking God in prayer, is both right and good. It's right that we do this, because God deserves our thanks and praise, but the bonus I've discovered is that it also good for my mental health.

Apart from parish visits over the last few months I've also been encouraged by a number of diocesan gatherings. Firstly, the *Next Phase* Conference came together well in Armidale. Thank you Chris Brennan and team for hosting it. About 115 people over 50 years of age came together and were given eyes to see how they might serve God with the gifts he has entrusted to them in the next phase of their life often as empty nesters approaching retirement. Former Sydney Archbishop Peter Jensen and his wife Christine spoke superbly and everyone left wanting more which was most encouraging. Sadly, I got COVID the week before it happened and couldn't attend, but from all reports it was a great start to what I hope and pray will be a yearly conference. God willing in time this will raise up an army of volunteers from across our diocese eager to get involved in gospel ministry in your parishes.

Secondly the Indigenous Ministry Conference at Narrabri was a big encouragement to me with nearly 50 people coming together to think about foundations for indigenous ministry. Kurt Langmead spoke about

the gospel we preach to all people, and Jum Naden spoke to the question of Aboriginal culture and how that does and doesn't affect what we do in reaching out to Aboriginal people with the good news of Jesus. It was a great reminder to me that we have excellent in-house speakers to help us think through this important matter of furthering ministry to Aboriginal people in our diocese. I think everyone on the organising team agreed it was the best Indigenous Ministry Day yet.

The other diocesan conference that happened very successfully was the Lay Evangelistic Speaking Training Day in Barraba with David Mansfield. It was so good to see that 60 people came to together and had training on preparing an Evangelistic Bible talk. Sadly, once again I was unable to attend because I wasn't well, but everything I've heard about that day has been encouraging. Well done Scott Dunlop and team from the Commission for Evangelism and Mission. I'm praying that God uses that training to help us identify some evangelists among our lay people.

Brothers and sisters can I encourage you to keep supporting and attending diocesan conferences like these. What a gift it is to have training and encouragement to help us get motivated and equipped for ministry!

Moving onto matters outside the diocese in the wider Anglican church briefly. It's been an interesting year. General Synod was a bit of a marathon and a rollercoaster at times, but we got there in the end and over-all the outcomes were positive for us as evangelicals.

The debate on human sexuality was always going to be the big item on the General Synod agenda. The batting began shakily with the narrow loss (in the house of Bishops only) of the motion to affirm the first Sydney statement- which sought to uphold Biblical marriage and make clear our opposition to the blessing of same sex marriage in the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA).

The Biblically conservative innings strengthened with a further Sydney statement

on the definition of unchastity which **was** upheld by all three houses laity, clergy and bishops (12/11). The effect of General Synod passing this statement is that it clarifies and upholds our Faithfulness in Service Code and safeguards our right to apply church discipline over matters concerning sexual immorality. It also implicitly affirmed the Biblical view of marriage as between a man and a woman only, underlining that sexual intimacy outside this context is considered "unchaste" and sexually immoral.

A further win for those of us seeking to uphold the Biblical view of human sexuality was the motion that affirmed singleness. This motion underlined the ongoing importance of the Faithfulness in Service Code and reminded all in the ACA of what it says. It was a good reminder to me to ensure that every clergy worker and lay worker ought to be given a copy of this code and required to read it as a condition of engagement in any ministry, paid or unpaid, within our churches. The Faithfulness in Service Code is important to ensure we go about our work in the life of the church with integrity for the good of all, but it is also important in the difficult circumstance where church discipline needs to be applied.

Also helpful for us as evangelicals at General Synod was a motion from Bishop Michael Stead that upheld the common understanding of the word "doctrine" for the matters pertaining to decisions in the church made at General synod. This was needed as the Appellate Tribunal of the ACA had very narrowly defined the term doctrine in order to come to its appalling conclusion that blessing same sex marriages was lawful according to the constitution of the ACA.

Another important win for evangelicals at General Synod was the sound defeat of Professor Anstey's motion "Affirming Same Sex Marriage" That motion sought to completely invert our church's understanding of human sexuality as seen most clearly in point g) of the motion which said that this

Blockbuster youth ministry



Ania Braiding and Tim Stevens.

Synod “g) considers same sex marriage as a moral good and a gift to be celebrated, providing an enrichment of the Christian understanding of marriage and a witness to God’s grace and love, consistent with the testimony of Scripture and Anglican tradition as expressed in the historic creeds.” In voting on Professor Anstey’s motion 95 said “yes” and 145 said “no” sending a very clear message that the General Synod of the ACA is still conservative on the matter of human sexuality and wishes to uphold the Biblical view of marriage that sees it as between a man and a woman only.

Also encouraging for us as evangelicals were the election results for the General Synod Standing committee. These show a clear swing in the ACA towards the growing influence of evangelicals with over 60% of those elected being evangelical. That means that the body elected to make decisions on behalf of General Synod between gatherings will certainly seek to uphold the authority of the Scripture. This is the best election result yet for evangelicals at General Synod and gives me hope looking forward.

Standing back from General Synod I think that overall, we should be encouraged as evangelicals. I believe that God continues to have His hand on the wider Anglican communion in Australia despite its motley nature. In all of this it is important to remember that God is still sovereign, Jesus is still king and He will build his church.

With these truths firmly in mind, from where I stand the task at hand for us all remains the same. May God continue to strengthen us by His Spirit to “Introduce All People to Jesus and Help Them Home to Heaven.”

With love in Christ,
Bishop Rod Chiswell.

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm, let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. For you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”

(1 Corinthians 15:58)

After several years of delays, the sequel to the highly popular 80s film, *Top Gun*, landed in cinemas recently. It’s a thrilling movie, and the box office takings have shown that the wait was well worth it. As I sat in the cinema watching it, I realised that despite the significant budget differences, the tale of the long-delayed *Top Gun* and the relaunch of youth ministry in the Diocese were very similar!

This year, after not being able to get together for a few years, youth ministry is back up and running, and like an unexpected blockbuster, it’s exceeded all our expectations. Here’s a snapshot.

In late March, over 200 youth and leaders got together for the first time in three years for the *Barraba Bash*. Steve Price from Calrossy and Dave Robinson from Glen Innes spoke from *Colossians* about the freedom that Jesus gives us. It was a cracking day, and it was so encouraging to have so many young people in the same place again to enjoy fellowship and time in God’s word. A huge thank you to the team from Barraba Anglican for opening their doors for us and letting us take over their church!

Straight after the *Barraba Bash*, the Diocese sent around 60 young people to Katoomba for *KYCK*. *KYCK* is a conference for teenagers run by Katoomba Christian Convention. It was great to get this new ministry opportunity off the ground. It was a great weekend learning about true Joy in the book of *Philippians*.

Then, after a few months to catch our breath, we will be running our *Lighter Fuel* conference in Armidale at the end of July. *Lighter Fuel* is a conference to help our young people think about how they’ll serve God for the rest of their lives. We are praying for a great day, with Bishop Rod and Archie Poulos (Moore College) teaching us from the Bible. Please pray that we keep working hard at recruiting young people to enter lay and ordained ministry and for *Lighter Fuel*’s place in doing this.

Then, after a hectic start to the year, we’re excited to be running *Youth Muster* again in November. Keep your eyes peeled for more information in the second half of the year.

It’s been an exciting relaunch of youth ministry across the Diocese this year. Just like those *Top Gun* pilots, as God continues to grow the ministry to young people in the Diocese it’s a privilege to strap ourselves in for His glory. Please pray for our youth committee and all doing youth ministry around the place. Pray that God will give them encouragement and refreshment in their vital ministry and that lots of the youth of our Diocese come along.

Evangelism in a time of war



Gillian Law and her GBU group in Rome.

FOR MANY YEARS, WAR HAS SEEMED DISTANT FROM OUR shores. The advance of technology has meant an ever-increasing awareness of conflicts around the world, most recently with war between Russia and the Ukraine. Yet we are physically separated by many, many kilometres – unlike Church Missionary Society worker, Gillian Law, who shares how the war is very much on Italy’s border. She shares what it looks like to share the gospel at such a time.

“Whilst tensions had been building for some time, the actual outbreak of war was sudden and scary. Alexandra*, a Ukrainian student studying in Italy, had returned that week to visit family in Kyiv after the winter exam session. She tells of the fear and shock of being in a city suddenly under attack. She stayed safe and was able to re-enter Italy to continue studying but not before missing her local GBU (the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students university Bible group) winter camp, somewhat comically writing to her staff-worker, ‘Sorry for the late notice, I can’t come to camp this week. They’re bombing my city’.

Europe is many countries but one union, so when Russia invaded Ukraine there was war on *Europe’s* border. It’s been fascinating to watch the political response of overwhelming unity to support Ukraine. And the response of Christians, both in Ukraine and wider Europe, has been encouraging and challenging in seeing their sacrifice and perseverance to love their neighbours. It is a wonderful example of how the question of *evangelism vs social action* is nonsensical. Evangelism in a time of war means showing God’s love in caring for immediate practical needs AND speaking of God’s love shown in the gospel of Jesus.

It means love in action for those in immediate need. A Bible college in Rome sent a team of students to the Ukraine-Romania border for a week: distributing medicines, food, bedding, and also New Testaments to refugees who had just escaped their homes. They collaborated with a local team that includes a long-term Italian missionary working with a church there (a great example of how short term mission teams work well when they work alongside an established ministry). The reality is that many of these refugees will move on but, like the good Samaritan who cared for the immediate needs of his new-found neighbour, these Christians showed love to those who passed by. And for those who stay, there are local Christians who can follow them up.

The IFES in Ukraine sprang into action in the immediate days, especially assisting students evacuate the eastern cities and helping those who were allowed (international and female students) to leave the country. Anna*, a staff worker, would say to the students, as she picked them up, ‘You’ve prepared your bag: good. But have you prepared your soul?’. The number of stories of people sharing their trust in Jesus are too many to list: in the face of death people are open

to hearing about the one who is the resurrection and the life.

Evangelism also means loving in the medium term. My church in Rome supports a Christian youth refuge in Sicily that provides a home to adolescents who can’t stay in their own home. They have the infrastructure and were able to welcome a group of Ukrainian refugees who had fled, moved past the initial stage of the border crossings, but needed a place to stay while they decided on their next phase. This centre welcomed them, supplied daily needs, took them to the beach one Saturday, and prayed with them: they gave them a safe and loving home.

And, of course, evangelism means continuing to speak of Jesus and how his death is the ultimate defeat of evil and how his resurrection is the first fruits of an eternal life with no more death, tears or pain. Natasha*, a Ukrainian student, recently shared that there are ‘no more atheists in Ukraine’; living with evil and knowing that life could end at any moment mean that people start searching for what might happen after death. Praise God that through the brave and faithful witness of Ukrainian Christians many are turning to Christ. Sara*, another IFES staff in Ukraine, recently asked for prayer for local churches who are flooded with new people: they are struggling to find ways to disciple new believers.

Europe has moved beyond her Christian history. People look to science, education, and politics for solutions to problems and a sense of meaning. For many wise reasons now is not the moment to be sending missionaries to a war zone, and God already has his witnesses in the danger areas. Yet the war has shown that no human idea can provide a lasting solution to death and evil. Europe desperately needs to re-hear the gospel of Jesus. People are needed to commit long term to serving local churches and parachurch organisations by loving people in word and action.

And in the meantime, Australians can respond by praying: after four months of war people are exhausted; pray for strength! People still live in fear for their lives and for how the situation will resolve; pray for peace! Christians continue to share their hope in Christ: pray for courage! And there are many new believers and others investigating Christianity; pray that God will protect his children from the Evil one!”

Maybe this has prompted you to want to learn more about how you can be involved in God’s mission around the world, and to hear more from Gillian. Join us for CMS Mission Encounter, in Tamworth, in August, as we hear from Gillian, as well as Adam and Helene Ramsay serving in Japan, and new workers, L and C, preparing to serve in South East Asia. Go to cms.org.au/missionencounter to secure your spot now.

**names changed for privacy and security reasons*



Which phase? Next phase!

Coffee and conversation about the next phase.

THE SEED FOR THE NEXT PHASE MINISTRY WAS PLANTED IN 2020, with a vision to reach out to the over 50s of our diocese, and to give them eyes to see the many ways they could continue to serve God and their brothers and sisters in Christ. It was planned as a time of encouragement, a celebration of the many ministries lay people are already involved with, and a way to encourage them to participate in the various lay training opportunities available. After a couple of false starts (due to COVID), everything came together for May 2022.

Over the 6th and 7th of May, 116 people gathered for the first *Next Phase* conference, some from as far away as Lightning Ridge. What followed was two days packed full of fellowship, great teaching, hearing just a little of what God is doing around the Diocese, and excellent food and music. There was also a fun evening out on Friday with musical trivia and a live band.

Peter Jensen, former Archbishop of Sydney, unpacked God's word over four talks. He spoke on faith and our need to trust in the Saviour; worship in response to knowing God's mercies; loving each other and God through service; and building the church. Peter's talks were directly relevant to the lives of those attending and were both encouraging and challenging. One of the highlights for many were the chats Peter had with his wife Christine about how God has used members of the church to help and encourage them during tough times.

The conference also featured nine electives on various practical ministries including; pastoral care, volunteering opportunities with Anglicare, lay preaching and lay locums, Bible study leading for both new and experienced leaders, children's ministries and scripture, technology in churches, gospel outreach teams, hospital visiting and setting up a pastoral care team. These were among the best parts of the conference as we heard about what God and His people are doing around the Diocese, about the many opportunities there are to get involved, and the encouragement to use your passions and abilities for the gospel.

Since *Next Phase*, several opportunities for lay training have been held: Small Group Leader's Training, a Lay Evangelistic Speaking Day, and the Indigenous Ministry Training Day. In addition to these, the Understanding Christian Care course is now available online through the Diocesan Office and has already been accessed by several individuals and churches.

Overall, feedback from the conference was extremely positive with many asking if *Next Phase* will run every year. The answer is, "Yes!". Planning has already begun for 2023. David Cook (and his wife Maxine) has agreed to be our speaker and dates have been chosen

– Friday 5th and Saturday 6th May.

We are very grateful to everyone who made the effort to come, having so many people attend was a great encouragement. We especially thank Peter and Christine Jensen, John Hillier, Kurt Langmead and all the elective leaders, musicians, AV team, caterers and of course, the wonderful volunteers.

A big thank you to Paul Harvey and the *Next Phase* team for pulling the event together and to the Dean, Chris Brennan, and the Cathedral parish for hosting it in Armidale. We look forward to seeing you at the next *Next Phase*!

Supporting your independence with home care



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Registry who's who

Diocese:

noun

an ecclesiastical district under the jurisdiction of a bishop

SOUNDS SIMPLE ENOUGH...A ONE-LINE ENTRY IN THE dictionary. But that simple one line cannot begin to explain the true meaning of what a diocese is. A diocese is a group of churches, of congregations, of clergymen and women. A diocese encompasses children and teenagers, the elderly, sick and infirm. A diocese may have a large indigenous or migrant population. Every diocese in Australia (and indeed throughout the Anglican communion) is different.

Our diocese is overseen by our bishop, Rod Chiswell. But it takes a team of people to support him in the running of an organisation which has, at its heart, the glory of God, the gospel of the Lord Jesus and the care and service of many, many souls already numbered in the Book of Life, as well as those yet outside the Kingdom, but knocking on the door.

The registry is the office of the Bishop of the Diocese of Armidale and his team. It is the base from which all the parishes around the Armidale Diocese are supported in their mission *To introduce all people to Jesus and help them home to Heaven*. All the parishes are different but they have the same standards for Safe Ministry, the same guidelines for electing a Parish Council, and need to be given the same information for upcoming events. So, who are these back-room people who keep our diocese ticking over? These are men and women who have been given the gift of administration (as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28), who work for our good as well as the glory of God, and who are deserving of our prayers. Let's meet them.

The Diocesan Registrar, who reports to the Bishop and oversees the administrative, financial, legal and property affairs of the diocese is the Reverend Christopher Pears. It would take another two pages to fully explore the responsibilities of the registrar, but in short, he manages the day to day operations of the Registry. This means co-ordinating the work of Diocesan Council, acting as the secretary to The Corporate Trustees of the Diocese of Armidale; making the arrangements for Synod meetings, which includes overseeing the preparation and distribution of papers, maintaining a list of synod members and overseeing the logistical arrangements; assisting in the preparation of diocesan ordinances and policy papers, and providing advice and support to parishes and special districts, individual clergy and the schools associated with the Diocese; He also prepares (alongside the Diocesan Accountant) the draft diocesan budget for consideration by Diocesan Council and Synod. He then monitors the budget position throughout the year, and ensures that all expenditure is appropriately authorised and that all money is banked and appropriately accounted for.

One of his most difficult jobs is in conjunction with the Bishop and the Director of Professional Standards, overseeing the handling of abuse-related redress claims, whether they be through the National Redress Scheme, the Diocesan Protocol for Caring for Survivors of Abuse, or through civil legal action; He serves as a clergy representative of the Diocese on General Synod; Serving as the Diocesan representative on the panel for the Provincial Tribunal. In his spare time, he preaches and leads services on occasions at various parishes around the Diocese. As this list shows, he is someone who needs our prayers!

Please pray: for wisdom as many parts of the role require great insight and understanding; and for good time management amongst the many competing demands of the role.

In this huge and often difficult job, the registrar and the bishop need excellent administrative support, and that is where Emily Speed comes in.

"I am Executive Assistant to the Bishop and the Registry Office Secretary," she told us. "I'm normally the first person you talk to when you call the office. I do reception, general administration, update the website, edit sermon videos and keep the office stocked in chocolate. A big part of my job is to help the bishop with things such as travel arrangements and organising meetings. I also do a lot of the logistics for various events that the Diocese runs such as ordinations, Clergy Conference and Synod."

It's a big job, but one Emily relishes. We asked her to tell us the best thing about her job. "Most of it! I love that my work so clearly serves God and the church. I love getting to talk to people from all over the diocese. I love all the variety my job has and the opportunities to learn new things. I love working in an office where people genuinely care about each other and how their walk with Christ is going. What I don't like is washing up!"

She asks us to pray that: we would all be encouraged and growing in our faith, that we would be able to support all the parishes and Special Districts in our diocese well, that our time management would be good, and that God would be glorified in all that we do.

The job of Bishop is one which requires an enormous amount of help. So, an assistant is invaluable. Rod Chiswell's assistant is the Reverend Ian Millican

"My official title is Assistant to the Bishop, and as part of that I am also Archdeacon for the New England – Guyra, Armidale, Uralla, Walcha, The Armidale School, New England Grammar School, and the Armidale Hospital Chaplaincy. I am also the Bishop's Examining Chaplain responsible for making sure we have good people coming to work in the Diocese, and that those going through theological college are supported," he told us. Ian has been in the job for over a year now, having been a long-term rector at a church in Sydney. Some people might think it unusual, this willingness to go from 'boss' to 'assistant', but Ian has no problems with it.

"I am still seeking to use my gifts and skills to serve Jesus and his people even though it is very different on a day-to-day basis. My work now is to help the bishop however I can with what he needs doing. Part of that is ministering at various parishes. I might be a rostered preacher for parishes or special districts without a clergyman, or an itinerant clergyman for parishes which need a one-off 'fill in' where a vicar is on leave or sick. That means I get to preach, service lead services and administer Holy Communion. Also, as I help the bishop in his relationships amongst the clergy, it helps that I understand something of the pressures and challenges they face, having been in a similar role, albeit in a very different context. Ministry remains the same in seeking to advance the kingdom of God and honour the Lord Jesus, but my work has changed to be more administrative (COVID regulations, safe ministry, Ordinances and policies, organising conferences, Inductions) and less focussed on just a particular congregation (this has been a more difficult adjustment) and more focussed on Diocesan-wide ministry."

Ian finds his job at the registry stimulating. "I really enjoy working



Registry team Caleb Dobos, Christopher Pears, Ian Millican and Rod Chiswell at the back. Samantha Brennan and Emily Speed in the front.

with the Registry team, the clergy, and the ministry teams here because they are a great group of people, with a warm, close collegiality and a strong sense of working together for the kingdom of God. It is a real joy to be amongst such people. I especially love getting out into the parishes and special districts and seeing God's people faithfully serving him in their local context, and seeking to proclaim the kingdom to their communities, is very heart-warming. God is still at work in the city and the country; in parishes big and small, and this is a great encouragement. Please pray that I will continue to focus on serving Christ here; for wisdom in the many decisions that need to be made; for pastoral sensitivity as I get to know people around the Diocese and seek to minister helpfully to them; and for dealing with the grief that has come from leaving family (we had to kick three of our children out of home in order to move to Armidale), friends, congregation, home and community."

Much of the work of the Registry centres around the administration of money. And Samantha Brennan's job is no different.

"I have two roles within the Registry Office: I am the Administrative Officer for the Diocesan Development Fund, and I am the Accounts Administrator for the Diocese," she said. "Basically, I deal with money and all things financial administration."

Many people have heard of the Diocesan Development Fund but, have no real idea how it works. We asked Sam to explain it in layman's terms.

"The Diocesan Development Fund (DDF) is a specific purpose fund where parishes, clergy and lay members of our Diocese can invest money, earning interest on their funds, while also supporting gospel ministry in our Diocese," she told us. "The DDF offers two accounts, the Monthly Saver Account, and the Community Saver Account. The DDF offers a split interest rate on these accounts, part is applied to the funds held in the account and part is paid by the DDF to the Parish, Diocesan Entity or Diocesan Project as chosen by the investor. That sounds complicated! It really isn't. For example, from 1 July 2022, the interest rate will be 1.60%p.a. (calculated daily, paid monthly) to the Investor and 0.30%p.a. (calculated daily, paid annually) to the Nominated parish, entity, or project. Total interest rate of 1.90%p.a.

The DDF also provides loans to parishes, diocesan entities, and clergy. Loans are given for motor vehicles, parish building projects or house purchases and home loans. On top of this, the DDF gives an annual contribution to the Diocese from any surplus that it makes for the Diocesan Council to use as it determines. From the 2021 financial year, the DDF gave \$30,000 to the Diocese for ministry use. This was in addition to the \$19,959 that was distributed across the Diocese as 'nominated interest' from the Community Saver and Monthly Saver Accounts. For more information, go to: <http://www.armidaleanglicandiocese.com/invest-with-us/>

[armidaleanglicandiocese.com/invest-with-us/](http://www.armidaleanglicandiocese.com/invest-with-us/)

No-one particularly likes talking about money, but Sam assures us that the DDF is extremely helpful for ministry. "The DDF is seeking to provide money for ministry, so investing in the DDF is an easy way to support ministry. You invest funds, you receive interest on those funds and a portion of your interest is given by the Fund to the parish, diocesan entity, or diocesan project of your choosing. The DDF is supporting clergy with loans, either motor vehicle loans or home loans and the Fund is supporting parishes with loans to purchase new clergy houses, land and buildings."

Sam is another person who is happy to be working at the Registry. "My gifting is in administration. It takes many parts to make up the body. Some people would rather do anything else but administration work, but I really love what I do. I get to work in the central office for our Diocese as we seek to support the Parishes, clergy, and lay people of our Diocese as we all prayerfully participate in the mission of introducing people to Jesus and helping them home to heaven. I love working for a Fund that seeks to distribute money throughout our Diocese. If I wasn't working for the Diocese, I would potentially be working for a corporate company that seeks to line its own pockets for its own gain. Working for the DDF and the Diocese we are seeking to use money as a tool to support gospel ministry work.

Please pray: That people from all areas of our Diocese would understand and be interested in supporting the DDF. That the Fund continues to grow. For the DDF Board members as they seek to manage the Fund. That I would be faithful and diligent in the roles that I have been given to do.

The final member of the registry team is Caleb Dobos, the Diocesan Accountant. He told us, "My responsibilities include setting the Diocesan budget, preparing annual accounts, producing monthly reports, and assisting parishes with financial matters. Money enables most ministry to happen, at least in part. This could be paying clergy or ministry workers so they can give their time and energy to gospel work, it could be buying materials for play day, or enabling maintenance for the buildings we use for ministry. The way we handle money with integrity, what we prioritise when it comes to spending and investing, and our faithful stewardship of what God has given us are also an important witness to those around us pointing to Jesus."

He asked us to pray that he would fulfill his role with integrity and a servant heart, and that he is able to balance his church and family commitments well, particularly in busy seasons. Please pray that people will be generous, and that God would be using those gifts to maintain and grow his church in our area, reaching all people with the saving news of the gospel and helping them to stay faithful until God calls them home to Heaven.



Loving the 35%

The Reverend Dr Danielle Treweek

is the founding director of Single Minded, a ministry which seeks to foster biblically faithful conversations about singleness. She splits her time between leading Single Minded, writing and speaking about Christian singleness (and all sorts of related topics) and serving in her role as the Research Officer for the Anglican Diocese of Sydney. She explained to us a bit about why ministry to single people is such a vital one within the church, in the hopes that more people in our Diocese might begin to think more proactively about how they can encourage, support and care for the single people in their churches.

I THOUGHT I'D MEET HIM AT YOUTH GROUP. I WASN'T OVERLY concerned when that didn't happen, because surely I'd meet him at university. And if not at university, then maybe he would enter the scene as a newcomer at church one random Sunday. And if not there, then I'd definitely meet him through friends. Or when I studied at Bible College. Or in that very (very!) brief time I tried online dating. Or when I started at a new church. Or...?

Spoiler alert – “he” didn't appear in or through any of these circumstances. He still hasn't. What seemed to happen so naturally, so easily, so quickly for the majority of my friends just never happened for me. And so as I moved through my 20s and my 30s (and now into my 40s) I was left confused, disappointed and, if I am to be completely honest, feeling a little let-down. Not so much by “him” (whoever he was meant to be!), but rather by those who had disciples me over so many years. They had taught me the Bible so faithfully. They had cared for me so lovingly. They had invested in my spiritual growth so consistently. I was very thankful for all of that. For all of **them**. But why was it that nobody had really helped me to think through or prepare for the reality that I might be a Christian woman who remained... single?

Imagine I asked you to guess what proportion of attendees in our Australian Anglican churches are single. What number would you land on? Would you be surprised to learn that a full 35% of people in our churches have never married, are divorced or widowed? If over one-third of the people in our pews have either never married or are no longer married, why is it that singleness plays such a minor role in our Christian life together? If we have a saviour who himself never married, and an Apostle who urged his readers to consider remaining unmarried (1 Cor 7:8), why is it that we don't honour singleness more proactively? If the picture of the new creation that awaits us is one in

which none of us will be married to each other (Mt 22:30), why is it that we, well, pity the prospect of being unmarried in this current creation?

As I grappled with my own singleness, as I ministered to other Christian women who were doing the same, as I looked at the community around me and realised that one in every four Australian homes is occupied by someone living alone, these were the questions which occupied my mind and my heart. Over and over again, I kept wrestling with the same question—**why** it is that we Christians tend to think so little of singleness?

And so, to answer that question I did what any self-respecting person (or perhaps, crazy) person would do. I did a PhD on singleness!

With my tongue firmly in cheek, I often quip that it was always my “life-long dream to become a Dr of Singleness”. But all joking aside, I was so thankful to be able to spend four years thinking about the place and purpose of singleness in God's word and from the perspective of the church across the last two thousand years. The end result was a 100,000 word thesis (being published as a book in 2023) which can be summed up in just one sentence: “We 21st Century Christians have such a regrettably lacklustre understanding of the joys, blessings and privileges of being single, and such an unfortunately limited understanding of just how important singles are within the life of the Church”.

Whether we are married or not, it's time for us all to start wrestling anew with what Scripture has to say about the significance of singleness for the sake of the Christian individual themselves, *and* for the sake of the Christian community as a whole. Because I promise you, the vision that God's word holds out about singleness in this life, and the life to come, is an important, exciting and wonderfully hopeful one!

To read more from Dani, go to <https://www.danielletreweek.com/>

A person of value

At the General Synod of the Anglican Communion of Australia, in May this year, the Rev. Dr Dani Treweek moved a motion to affirm singleness. The following is part of that speech.



"...I stand before you today, the General Synod of the denomination of which I've been a member my entire life, into which I have been ordained, whose members I serve and which I love, asking us to not merely affirm and honour singleness, but to affirm, honour, encourage and love our single brothers and sisters in Christ.

All of them.

In preparation for this speech I asked a range of never-married, divorced and widowed Anglican men and women why they think it is so important that their national church affirms singleness as a genuinely honourable state for God's people.

I wish I could share all of the responses with you in full today. However, I have a healthy fear of that timekeeping bell. So instead, here are just a couple of short comments from a few of our unmarried brothers and sisters:

'I just want to be seen as whole... as complete as I am.'

'I just want to be considered a person of value in the church.'

'I just want to feel normal.'

Our single brothers and sisters are right to want this from us, because this is what God's word call us to give them.

Singleness is highly commended in Scripture. God's word:

Honours godly singleness as a truly good ... dare I say it... even better state for the Christian person.

It calls us to understand singleness to be a gift from our gracious heavenly father.

It celebrates the unmarried Christian's capacity to be undivided in their devotion to him.

It points us towards a new creation in which we will not be married to each other.

And finally, ultimately, God's word reveals to us that we have a saviour who was himself fully human, truly fulfilled and wonderfully single.

Singleness is highly commended and honoured in Scripture. But is it as highly commended and honoured in our life together?

The evidence suggests it is not.

I fear that our reluctance to genuinely honour singleness is deeply informed by an underlying and often unspoken suspicion that singleness is an undesirable and even unliveable state. A large part of our reasoning for this is bound up in contemporary attitudes towards sex.

To live a potential lifetime without sex? To never experience the joy of sexual union with another person. To expect an unmarried Christian to resist sexual temptation till their life's end?

The world around us sees such prospects as unthinkable... even cruel. And so it also sees the Christian aspiration of a chaste single life as unthinkable... even cruel.

But what do we, the Anglican Church of Australia think?..."

To read the full motion go to <https://danielletreweek.substack.com/p/a-motion-to-affirm-singleness>

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out. We know that there are some severe financial stresses on so many people, so we can negotiate payment, or perhaps even connect you will a financial counsellor if that is what you need.

As Christians, we know that God answers prayer, and God can change people. Why, then, do Christians need counselling? Should they not be able to pray and read the Bible and just wait for God to change them?

It is easy to read the Bible but not really engage in change. We have to work on ourselves. We have to look in the mirror and really see ourselves. We must reflect on the things that we're doing because, as Christians, we want to be changing and moving towards how God wants us to be. I think you need someone there working with you, that you feel comfortable with. If we know we have issues we have to be, like Joshua, *strong and courageous in the Lord*. We might have to make a brave decision, humble ourselves, and say 'I need help'. Counsellors are not there to judge. I accept every client as a person made in God's image. One of the great privileges I have is to be able to pray with Christian clients. That is a lovely thing.

What's the best thing about your job as a counsellor?

It is such a privilege to be able to sit down and meet people and work with them and go on a journey with them. That journey might not be easy. It might be really challenging. Some of the work is hard and the client is the one who has got to go home and do that hard work, putting into practice the strategies and other things we have discussed. Sometimes people have not dealt with things before, and they've been in patterns that have gone on for years and years. I'm not a magician. We need to work together as a team and then the person goes home and puts those changes into a place. What we are looking for in counselling is small shifts. We want to see small steps and changes in the way a person is doing things. And seeing those small steps is always exciting.



If you... have time to care for a child, have experience in working with or caring for children, can instil hope in a child and help them have a better future...**YOU** could be that someone!

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Taking small steps



CHERYL LALOR WORKS AS A SENIOR COUNSELLOR FOR Anglicare in Tamworth. Along with her colleagues Julianne Lilley in Armidale and Libby Every in Moree, she provides a range of counselling services for people in the north-west.

To a lot of people “counselling” can be a scary word. So we sat down with Cheryl and asked her to explain exactly what counselling is, how it works, and who can benefit.

What is counselling in its most basic terms?

A person comes to counselling because they perceive they've got a problem. Something's not working, so they come seeking support, to work through something that's not going well in their lives. I always say to clients when they come into the room, 'Counselling is usually about engaging in change.'

When we realise that something is not working, we can keep doing the same thing and get the same result. Stay on the same path and nothing will change. It might be a problem in a relationship; it might be an addiction; it might be feelings of loss and grief that are overwhelming day-to-day life. So I always say to people when they walk through the door, 'You have already engaged in the process of change by just walking through the door and making the appointment.'

How does the process of counselling begin?

I like to find out something about the person, what has brought them here and especially what they want to get out of this. The client has to feel safe and comfortable with you. If that's not happening, we won't get anywhere. It's very difficult. People are brave; coming to talk with someone they don't know anything about. I am very aware that people are placing their trust in me. And we are not here to tell them what to do! I often tell clients that in this space, they are here to explore things and to be comfortable enough to tell me about what's going on. I'm not going to say, 'Well, you need to do this.' We have to work that out together. Often clients don't have any awareness about themselves, so they need to develop that awareness. Sometimes that can take years, sometimes it is much quicker.

It has been a difficult couple of years for most people. COVID, the preceding drought and fires, then the floods, along with the bad news in the world, all seem to have had a cumulative effect on people's peace of mind. Can feelings like this become so severe that people may need counselling?

Oh yes! I suspect there are a lot of people suffering all sorts of grief that they're not recognizing as grief. With everything that's been happening, people have reached their threshold of tolerance. There are a lot of people feeling that they just can't take any more.

For some reason, people often feel embarrassed at getting to the point of not coping, and approaching the idea of counselling. What would you say to someone feeling like that?

I can't own other people's feelings. They may feel embarrassed. But we all have problems; we all have times where we think the world is caving in, and I think it's okay. I love the word okay! It's okay to feel as though I am falling apart. It's okay to think I can't cope with this. It's okay to feel that I'm not the mother I used to be and I just can't deal with all the things I used to deal with. People often say, 'What's wrong with me?' It's okay to think that something is wrong with you! I'm saying it's okay. If we're not traveling well, we might need some help.

So how does someone access this help from an Anglicare counsellor?

Call 67018 200. You will speak to someone for a few minutes who will ask you some basic questions. It is a secure intake process that any good practice would be doing. And we do I think we do a good job of that. You are then put on a list to wait until an appropriate counsellor can be found at an appropriate time. If it is an absolute emergency, we work hard to make sure you can see someone quickly.

The other thing people often worry about is how they will pay for this service.

We have a scale of payment according to your income. If you earn a small amount, you will pay a small amount. If you earn more, you will pay a little more. If finances are really difficult, we will sort something

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