
FACT SHEET

TOWARDS PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE¹

Interim Report of The Motion 29 Working Group

This document is intended to summarise the Working Group's recommendations concerning Motion 29. It was prepared by Rev Stephen Black with reference to both the Interim Report and the analysis of Rev Dr Peter Carrell (Christchurch Diocese).

Background

- The Anglican Church has been engaged in the theology of same-sex attraction and relationships in NZ since at least 1978.
- Over the past 39 years the church has made several attempts to make sense of this complicated issue. This particular Interim Report is the product of a deadlock at the General Synod of 2016.
- Working Group (WG): "comprised membership across the theological spectrum concerning same gender blessings" (p. 14), i.e. it was fully representative.

Mandate

- The WG **was not invited** to reconsider the theology of same-gender relationships **nor** interpret Scripture.
- The WG was invited to propose a structure that would honour both theological integrities and hold them "together within the same ecclesial family so that no one was forced to compromise sincerely held beliefs" (p. 5).

Recommendations

- A: No alterations to formularies of church. The Prayer Book will not be changed. Our definition of marriage will not be changed. Marriage will continue to be a right-ordered relationship between a woman and a man.
- B: The theological convictions of dioceses and ministry units within dioceses will be safeguarded.
- C: Declarations of adherence and submission to authority of General Synod will be amended. Effectively this means committing to The Constitution and Code of Canons without being bound by the decisions of GS.

¹ *Interim Report of the Motion 29 Working Group (IRM29WG), p.7.*

- D: Service of blessing.
 - Bishops **may** authorize individual clergy to conduct a service of same-gender relationship blessing **only where** the Bishop, **and** the priest officiating, **and** the vestry/PC of the ministry unit in question are willing.
 - A priest can only be authorized in his/her own ministry unit, therefore authority within one unit **does not grant authority anywhere else**.
 - A blessing can only be given to those who are already in a civil union. (A priest may not celebrate a civil union and then bless it in the same service.)
- E: Immunity from complaint: “WG recommends immunity from **any** [my emphasis] complaint that could arise from a decision bishops or clergy make concerning whether to conduct a same gender blessing or not” (p. 11).
- F: Order of Consecrated Life: Honouring the affiliation of those of like-mind to Religious Orders and Christian Communities while remaining within the Province and under ecclesial authority in this Church. For example, allowing an Anglican Ministry Unit to be affiliated with AFFIRM or F.O.C.A.
- G: 2016 Way Forward Report: WG recommends that the Way Forward report be acknowledged and received **but** that its recommendation **be withdrawn** at 2018.
- H: Other ecclesial arrangements. The proposal to create separate church structures to accommodate ministry units that ascribed to a particular theological conviction was seen as beyond the scope of the WG (who was explicitly asked to hold everyone “together within the same ecclesial family”).

Additional Matters

- Advice given to the WG (and supplied directly by the Attorney General to Archbishop Philip) confirms that any complaint brought under the Human Rights Act 1993 regarding a ministry unit’s refusal to offer a same-gender blessing would be “very unlikely to succeed” (p. 14).

What next?

- Read the *Interim Report of The Motion 29 Working Group*
- Watch Archbishop Philip’s training and education videos (you can also download them):
 - <https://vimeo.com/233250564>
 - <https://vimeo.com/233373551>
- Contact Rev Stephen Black and your Archdeacon with any questions or invitations to discuss the Interim Report (stephen@waikatoanglican.org.nz | 027 741 0949 | 07 857 0437)
- Arrange information and discussion meetings for your community to help them understand what the issues are.
- Ensure that your Synod Representatives are equipped to understand and contribute to the discussion at Synod (should they be required).