

General Synod Session 2004

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Introduction

1. The 13th General Synod was held in Fremantle from 2-8 October 2004. The 14th General Synod will be held in 2007.

2. The 13th General Synod consisted of 239 members of whom 53 were from the Diocese of Sydney. 78 resolutions were passed and 13 canons, 4 provisional canons and 2 rules were made. A number of elections also took place for General Synod boards and committees.

Resolutions

3. Many of the 78 resolutions related to formal matters concerning the business of General Synod. Others were of more significance. The following paragraphs summarise those resolutions of particular interest.

33/04 Child Protection – 1

4. The General Synod received the report of the Child Protection Committee and adopted the following from the report as the Church's *Safe Ministry Policy Statement* –

“The Anglican Church of Australia is committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people, particularly within its own community. The Church will:

- carefully recruit and train its clergy and church workers;
- adopt and encourage safe ministry practices by its clergy and lay church workers;
- respond promptly to each concern raised about the behaviour of its clergy and lay church workers;
- offer pastoral support to any person who has suffered abuse; and
- provide pastoral support to and supervision of any person known to have abused a child or another vulnerable person.”

5. The General Synod also adopted –

- (a) the *Safe Ministry Check* as the national applicant and referee questionnaires for the selection of ordination candidates and for the screening of clergy and church workers who have contact with children in their ministry, and
- (b) *Faithfulness in Service* as a national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and lay workers.

88 Report of Standing Committee & Other Reports & Papers

6. The General Synod Standing Committee was authorised to review the *Safe Ministry Check* and *Faithfulness in Service*.

35/04 Child Protection – 3

7. General Synod recommended that each diocese, parish and church organisation adopt the Church's *Safe Ministry Policy Statement* and develop and implement safe ministry policies and structures. In particular, the General Synod recommended that each diocese adopt –

- a system for the selection of ordination candidates that includes the *Safe Ministry Check* as well as a medical report, a children's commission check or criminal history check and some form of psycho-sexual assessment.
- a system for screening clergy that includes the *Safe Ministry Check* and a children's commission check or a criminal history check with screening to be carried out immediately prior to ordination, the issuing of a licence or authorisation or, in the case of a Bishop, consecration. It was recommended that repeat screening be carried out on the expiry of a children's commission check or every 3 years, whichever ever occurs first.

8. The General Synod also made recommendations in relation to –

- the inclusion of ordination candidates and unlicensed clergy on the proposed National Register
- the adoption of a system of screening by each diocese for all paid and voluntary church workers who have contact with children or supervise such church workers,
- the adoption of a code of personal behaviour by each diocese and regular training in the code,
- training in professional ethics in ministry and in human sexuality,
- the completion of safe ministry training prior to ordination and regularly thereafter,
- the adoption of a system of pastoral support for all people in the diocese affected by abuse by clergy and church workers,
- the adoption of a system of pastoral support and pastoral supervision of known abusers of children and other vulnerable people,
- the inclusion within the system of ministry support for clergy peer support, coaching and so forth.

36/04 Child Protection – 4

9. The General Synod commended the National Council of Churches in Australia for organising *Safe as Churches?* a national ecumenical consultation on sexual misconduct and abuse in the Australian churches and recommended that the National Council of Churches in Australia facilitate joint action to promote the physical,

emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people within their communities.

10. The General Synod also recommended that –

- State and Territory Governments enact uniform laws for the reporting of child abuse, the screening of persons seeking to work with children (whether paid or voluntary) and protection from liability for those who report misconduct to a church authority in good faith,
- the Commonwealth Government, the State Governments of South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia and the Northern Territory Government each establish a children's commission or an equivalent office to promote the protection of children similar to that in the States of New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania,
- the State and Territory Governments each provide funding and training for a program for the reintegration of sex offenders within the community on their release from prison,
- the Commonwealth Government convene a national summit on child protection as the first step in establishing a national strategy for the prevention of child abuse and neglect,
- the Anglican Consultative Council establish a Safe Ministry Task Force to promote the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people within member churches of the Anglican Communion,
- child protection and the prevention of abuse and relevant law reform issues be made an item for discussion for the Council of Australian Government (COAG).

38/04 Apology for Sexual Abuse

11. The General Synod acknowledged with deep regret and repentance the past failings of the Church and its members and apologised unreservedly on behalf of the whole Anglican Church to those who have been harmed by sexual abuse perpetrated by people holding positions of power and trust in the Church. The General Synod also apologised for actively working against and discouraging those who came forward and reported abuse and acknowledged to its shame that the Church only took notice when the survivors of abuse became a threat. The General Synod apologised and sought forgiveness for the Church's failure at many levels to listen to and acknowledge the plight of those who have been abused, and to take adequate steps to assist them and to prevent abuse from happening or reoccurring. The General Synod committed the Church to listen to survivors of abuse and to respond with compassion to all who have been harmed and to deal appropriately, transparently and fairly with those accused of abuse and negligence.

40/04 Refugees

12. The General Synod noted the Report of the Refugee Working Group and continued to express its concern for the millions of displaced people in the global community. It applauded the work of Anglicans and Anglican agencies throughout this country working to support refugees and asylum-seekers and noted the ongoing dialogue between the Minister of Immigration and the Primate and former chair of the Working Group. The General Synod supported the concept of a Complementary Protection Visa as promoted by the NCCA, Amnesty International and the Refugee Council of Australia. The General Synod also commended to the dioceses the plan for a diocesan education program on these matters as suggested in the report of the Working Group.

41/04 Our Neighbours in Distress

13. The General Synod acknowledged the challenges faced by the church and peoples in Melanesia and committed itself to raising awareness in the Church through visiting our Melanesian brothers and sisters and through articles in our church media. It also committed itself to encouraging members of the Church to become volunteers in practical projects and through the development of policy and strengthening of governance through agencies such as ABM, Anglicord and Government Agencies. The General Synod also committed itself to encouraging the Public Affairs Commission to continue its work in this area.

46/04 Women in the Episcopate

14. The General Synod acknowledged that it had reaffirmed its in-principal support for the ordination of women to the episcopate and noted with thanks the generosity of spirit which had characterised the debate. It acknowledged the pain of many faithful and loyal Anglicans at this outcome and committed itself to maintaining the overall unity of the National Church, including the unity of each diocese under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop and believes such unity is essential for the overall effectiveness of the Church's mission to bring the Gospel of Christ to all people. The General Synod also affirmed that those who dissent from, as well as those who assent to the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate are both loyal Anglicans.

49/04 Anglican – Muslim Dialogue – 2

15. The General Synod noted that Tony Payne's book *Islam in our Backyard*, had been circulated to all Federal politicians and some politicians at the State level. The General Synod resolved to resist the banishment of religious discussion from the public arena, and commended open public discussion of the truth claims of both Islam and Christianity (and other religions). It also resolved to urge Federal and State politicians to resist any moves to stifle open, honest discussion of the disparate truth claims made by any religion or political party or philosophical group that seeks to utilise freedom of speech in Australia to make their views known. The General Synod

also requested the General Secretary to write to Federal and State political leaders expressing the sentiment of the resolution and asking that they show particular care to maintain an environment that allows for free speech, honest discussion, and genuine persuasion.

51/04 The Forgotten Australians

16. The General Synod noted that a report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children – the *Forgotten Australians* report – was tabled in Federal Parliament on 30 August 2004. It noted that the report calls on governments, churches and agencies to issue formal statements acknowledging their roles in past institutional care policies and practices and the impact these have had on the lives of many care leavers. To this end the General Synod acknowledged that many children who were placed in institutional care during the last century experienced neglect, harm and distress; and in particular cases, experienced serious physical and sexual abuse and assault – the effects of which are life-long. The General Synod resolved to extend a formal apology to those children and requested each diocese involved in the provision of institutional care extend an apology in similar terms. The General Synod acknowledged that the Church is called to assist and support those persons who have been harmed by and in its institutions; and requested each diocese to consider appropriate strategies – which recognise the personal significance of the harm done to individual persons and their likely distrust of the Church – to encourage those who have been harmed to come forward. It also commended the report to the dioceses, institutions and agencies of the Church and requested that they prayerfully and objectively consider the report and its implications.

59/04 Faithfulness in Service

17. The General Synod approved “Faithfulness in Service” as the code of conduct for observance by Bishops.

61/04 Sexuality and Gender Relationships – 1

18. The General Synod noted the Lambeth Conference resolution on human sexuality and subsequent developments in various parts of the Anglican Communion. It welcomed the publication of the study guide to *Faithfulness in Fellowship* and urged dioceses to promote the use of the study guide. It also commended to the dioceses the Doctrine Commission’s recently published essays *Lost in Translation*. It requested that dioceses commit themselves to listen as the church develops a Christian response to the contemporary experience of human sexuality.

62/04 Sexuality and Gender Relationships – 2

19. The General Synod, recognising that this is a matter of ongoing debate and conversation in this Church and that we all have an obligation to listen to each other with respect, resolved not to condone the liturgical blessing of same sex relationships.

63/04 Sexuality and Gender Relationships – 3

20. The General Synod, recognising that this is a matter of ongoing debate and conversation in this Church and that we all have an obligation to listen to each other with respect, resolved not to condone the ordination of people in openly committed same sex relationships.

64/04 Sexuality and Gender Relationships – 4

21. The General Synod welcomed the initiative of the Federal Parliament in clarifying that marriage, at law in this country, is the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life.

67/04 Mission and Attendance

22. This resolution was moved by Archbishop Peter Jensen and is extracted as an attachment to the report at Appendix A.

74/04 Lay Presidency – 1

23. The General Synod requested Diocesan Councils and Standing Committees to consider the theological, doctrinal and ecclesial implications of lay and diaconal administration or presidency of the eucharist. The General Synod requested its Standing Committee to consider the implications of a diocese of the church professing to authorise and implement lay and diaconal administration. The General Synod also noted the opinion of the Appellate Tribunal that although Lay Presidency is consistent with the Constitution it requires a Canon of the General Synod to implement it, and urged any Diocesan Synod considering legislation on this matter to consider the Appellate Tribunal's opinion, the theological and legal issues and the implication for the unity of this Church, the Anglican Communion and our ecumenical partners. The General Synod resolved that it does not condone the practice of lay and diaconal administration at the eucharist in this Church.

Canons

24. In 2004 the General Synod passed the following canons -
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council Canon Amendment Canon 2004*
 - NSW Provincial Constitution Ratification Canon 2004*
 - Canon to repeal the Anglican Superannuation Australia Canon 1995 (1 1998)*
 - Strategic Issues, Commissions, Task Forces and Networks Canon Amendment Canon 2004*
 - Corporate Trustees Canon 1962 Amendment Canon 2004*
 - Strategic Issues, Commissions, Task Forces and Networks Canon (Amendment) Canon 2004*
 - Special Tribunal Canon 2004*
 - Canon to Amend the Primate Canon 2004*
 - The Australian College of Theology (Amendment) Canon 2004*

Holy Orders, Relinquishment and Deposition Canon 2004
Constitution Amendment (Relations with Other Churches)
Canon 2004
National Register Canon 2004
Constitution Alteration (Chapter IX) Canon 2004

25. In 2004 the General Synod also passed the following canons as provisional canons –

Holy Orders (Reception into Ministry) Canon 2004
Canon Concerning Holy Orders 2004
Canon to Restrain Certain Consecrations 2004
Episcopal Standards Canon 2004

26. Some of the canons referred to in paragraph 24 have already taken effect, others will not take effect unless the requisite majority of diocesan synods assent by ordinance, and still others will not take effect in Sydney until they are adopted by our Synod. The canons will be referred to our General Synod Canons Committee for comment and, in due course, a further report prepared for the Synod.

Elections

27. The following persons from Sydney were elected to the following General Synod boards and committees.

<i>Council of the Australian College of Theology</i>	<i>The Board of Electors for the Primate</i>
Bishop Glenn Davies	Bishop Glenn Davies
The Rev Dr Mark Thompson	Mr Justice Peter Young
Dr Ann Young	Deaconess Margaret Rodgers
<i>Standing Committee</i>	Dr Laurie Scandrett *
Bishop Robert Forsyth	Dr Barry Newman *
Mr Garth Blake SC	<i>Long Service Leave Board</i>
Deaconess Margaret Rodgers	Mr Doug Marr
Mr Justice Peter Young	
<i>Special Tribunal</i>	<i>Appellate Tribunal</i>
Bishop Glenn Davies	Mr Justice Keith Mason
<i>The Board of Assessors (Appellate Tribunal)</i>	
Bishop Glenn Davies	
Canon Dr Robert Doyle	
The Rev Dr Mark Thompson	

* Supplementary

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

ROBERT WICKS
Diocesan Secretary
17 August 2005

Annexure A

67/04 MISSION AND ATTENDANCE

That this General Synod:

1 Expresses its appreciation to Mr Wayne Brighton, Mr Keith Castle and Dr John Bellamy for their comprehensive report *Church Attendance and Mission 1991-2001* and helpful concluding discussion questions, which was both confronted and positively challenged the Anglican Church of Australia with the raw statistical realities of our declining attendance and relevance in Australian society.

2 Acknowledges that the Anglican Church of Australia is called to be an active participant in God's mission to our nation whereby its people might be saved through hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ as declared in Holy Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit.

3 Responds to our declining attendance not with despair or discouragement, but with renewed trust in our sovereign God, confident in the words of Christ that he will build his church and that the gates of hell shall not overcome it; and therefore resists any temptation from within or without our church to adapt the unchanging gospel in an effort to make it more palatable to an unbelieving generation, since the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe.

4 Recognises that the Anglican Church in Australia has undergone substantial numerical decline as shown in the *Church Attendance and Mission 1991-2001* report (General Synod 2004 Book 3a, Standing Committee Report, pp102-131), resulting in significant demographic challenges to the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

5 Acknowledges that without immediate and wide-spread action, the alarming rate of decline (~20%, General Synod 2004 Book 3a, Standing Committee Report, p109) in the under 50 age group is a cause for grave concern for the future of the Anglican Church in Australia. This must be our highest priority.

6 Affirms that an important strategy for future mission in Australia will be the development of a 'mixed economy' Church consisting of existing and fresh expressions working together in partnership. As the development of this model will require considerable cooperation and collegiality it asks that:

- (a) the Standing Committee of General Synod:
 - (i) make evangelistic mission a priority strategic issue for the next triennium;
 - (ii) examine local and overseas initiatives at starting new communities of faith and fresh expressions of church to ensure that the Church nationally is better informed about developments and potential areas of interest;

- (iii) pay particular attention to the recommendations of the Children's and Young People's Taskforce (as previously approved by this General Synod) in their deliberations concerning the development of new communities of faith;
 - (iv) determine what training and development might be necessary to foster leadership and ministry skills required in these areas; and
 - (v) release resources, both human and financial, to further work in this key area as appropriate.
- (b) the Bishops' Conference to:
- (i) consider the place and potential contribution of new communities of faith and fresh expressions of church to the long-term life of Australian Anglicanism;
 - (ii) discuss how permeable our parish and diocesan boundaries might need to be in view of the fact that our society lives increasingly in networks than neighbourhoods;
 - (iii) determine what appropriate processes and procedures might be required to facilitate ministry across these geographical boundaries; and
 - (iv) how they might play an active brokering role in their apostolic duties as leaders of mission.

7 Urges dioceses to more clearly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ by:

- (a) appraising the health of existing ministries and parishes;
- (b) reviewing diocesan ordinances so as to better facilitate mission initiatives;
- (c) considering the contribution of new communities of faith to this goal;
- (d) developing medium to long-term strategic plans for the growth of the church through evangelism;
- (e) developing diocesan processes, procedures and partnerships for brokering mission initiatives within and across diocesan boundaries; and
- (f) releasing diocesan resources, both human and financial, as appropriate to support such strategies;

8 Encourages the formation of a coalition of interested parties and practitioners so that learning and resources about starting new communities and faith and fresh expressions of church might be shared and developed.

9 Requests that the General Secretary collate, summarise and distribute the feedback from the discussion at this Synod and

subsequent deliberations from the Standing Committee of General Synod.

10 Recognising that much of our resources are tied up with maintaining various structures in our church, encourages all diocesan standing committees/councils and synod meetings in 2005 to re-examine the percentage of their financial budgets that directly resource church growth, church planting, evangelism and evangelism training in their diocese, and to plan how they might proceed in the difficult realignment of resources towards such ends.

11 recognising that strong leadership is essential if decline is to be reversed in our church, and that proclaiming the gospel in an increasingly secular Australian society requires of our people much courage, boldness and inspiration, encourages all bishops and incumbents to lead their dioceses and parishes by personal and public example according to their evangelistic gifts and abilities.

Peter Jensen - 7 Oct 04