



The Archbishops and Primates
of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We commend this report of *The Way Forward Working Group* to the Church for prayerful study and consideration.

General Synod/Te Hinota Whanui 2014 established *The Way Forward Working Group* to identify, for the Church's consideration, a mechanism that could provide for the blessing of committed, monogamous, life-long, same-sex relationships. The mechanism and rationale contained in this report is the result of months of debate by a group that reflects the wide spectrum of views on these matters within our Church. For some members of the Working Group what is offered does not go far enough, for others it goes further than they would want to support. However our Working Group believes that this is the right mechanism for this Church to consider and they offer it to us all in that spirit.

As such they represent, both in their way of working together, and in their reporting to us, the very best this Church is capable of. They have been our true servants.

General Synod 2014 reaffirmed the Doctrine of Marriage as being between a man and a woman covenanted together in life-long fidelity. The Way Forward Working Group was not mandated to revisit this decision and has not done so.

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia is culturally and theologically diverse, and it includes multiple national legal jurisdictions. Consequently, the Way Forward Working Group has considered the differing legal situation in New Zealand, and the respective nation states of the Pacific region that fall within the boundaries of the Diocese of Polynesia. The mechanism the Working Group offers for our consideration works with this reality and these differences to suggest a way that provides a clear protection of conscience.

In terms of process, this report, like many others for the General Synod/Te Hinota Whanui, will be sent to all members of the General Synod/Te Hinota Whanui for their consideration. In sharing this report with you, we remain hopeful that the wider community of the Church will be given the opportunity to share their concerns and reflections with their communities. This report will be tabled for discussion at the next General Synod/Te Hinota Whanui in Napier in May.



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in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

Te Hahi Mihinare ki Aotearoa, ki Niu Tirenī, ki Nga Moutere o te Moana Nui a Kiwa

In offering the report and a possible way forward on these matters, the *Working Group* has sought to build on many years of discussion and study across this Church. In particular, they build on the work of the Commission on Doctrine and Theological Questions, which reported to General Synod/Te Hinota Whanui in 2014. That report presented two clearly-argued positions, both with their own biblical and theological integrity. One argued that the blessing of committed, monogamous, life-long same-sex relationships was outside of the doctrinal possibilities the Church can consider, the other that such relationships can and should be able to receive the blessing of the Church.

The Way Forward Working Group has assumed that these two integrities cannot be reconciled. The Working Group has then asked whether these two integrities can be held together in the same Church. Can we acknowledge that those who have strongly-held views which are different to our own are also seeking to be obedient to the one Gospel of Jesus Christ? Can we honour the integrity of a position we cannot in conscience agree with?

The Working Group offers a mechanism which could provide for the blessing of committed, monogamous, life-long, same-sex relationships while upholding the doctrine of Christian marriage as our Church has received it.

General Synod/Te Hinota Whanui 2016 will consider this Report and will need to decide whether to receive the report and its recommendations and, if so, how to act on its recommendations. The Working Group have also made it clear that if General Synod in May decides that the mechanism proposed in this report has merit then this *should* go back to each Hui Amorangi and each Diocese for consideration and decision. There are a number of ways this can be achieved, all of which General Synod/Te Hinota Whanui can consider.

The Working Group, and this Church as a whole, is deeply aware that we are engaged in a discussion and debate that is taking place world-wide. At the recent meeting of the Primates, which two of us attended, there was wide acknowledgement that these matters are and will be debated in every corner of the Anglican World and that, in time, every part of the Communion will have to navigate these matters.

We are deeply grateful to Mr Bruce Gray QC and the members of the Working Group for the diligent and grace-filled way they have fulfilled the mandate given to them by General Synod/Te Hinota Whanui 2014. This has been a demanding task which the Working Group has completed with great care and faithfulness. As a Church we are in their debt.

Now we invite our Church's careful and prayerful consideration of this report and all that it contains through respectful conversation. May we all seek the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit as we do so.



Archbishop Winston Halapua
Bishop for the Diocese of Polynesia in
Aotearoa New Zealand



Archbishop Philip Richardson
Senior Bishop of New Zealand Dioceses



Archbishop Brown Turei
Bishop of Aotearoa



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