



The Archbishops and Primates
of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

2nd July 2017

To the Bishops, clergy and people of the
Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Interim Report of The Primate's Working Group on Motion 29

In May 2016 the General Synod/ Te Hīnota Whānui of our Church met in Napier and received the report and recommendations of the *A Way Forward – He Anga Whakamua – Na Sala ki Liu* Working Group. Following a long and demanding debate at General Synod/ Te Hīnota Whānui there was no clear way forward. Rather than force the issue, and largely due to the suggestion of the late Archbishop Brown Turei, it was recognised that more time was needed to safeguard all concerned and the matter was left to lie on the table.

General Synod/ Te Hīnota Whānui did however ask the Primates to establish a further Working Group. Its mandate, as set out in Motion 29, was to be tightly focused and its task was to *“consider possible structural arrangements within our the three Tikanga church to safeguard both theological convictions concerning the blessing of same gender relationships”*.

This Working Group has met or teleconferenced for just over six months and considered a wide range of submissions and representations from persons and groups with diversely held perspectives. All submissions were deeply and prayerfully considered and many of these informed much of the resultant report, which is attached, and became the foundation of the recommendations which have been made.

Although the mandate was to consider possible structural arrangements which would safeguard persons holding different theological positions, there was also a primary focus that any recommendations made should hold our people together in the same ecclesial family without the need to pull apart. The biblical image held by the Working Group was that of Christ as the cornerstone of this church holding together both structurally and in love its many different parts.

The mandate talks of two integrities, but the Working Group recognised, and many submitters



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acknowledged, that there are more than that; there are a spectrum of views and so there needs to be a range of possible ways forward. They have tried to create a toolbox of recommendations which will provide the structural mechanisms needed to safeguard those of very different theological convictions, so that there are places to safely stand without compromise to sincerely held beliefs. The recommendations focus on decision making on these matters being made at the level of the episcopal unit and the local ministry unit, rather than to be decisions of the General Synod.

Members of the Working Group have been acutely aware that there are deep pastoral implications in whatever recommendations are proposed. They speak of having been upheld by the prayers of God's people and how this has been a great encouragement and a great strength. As Archbishops we have tried to ensure close contact with the work of the group and one of us has been present for significant parts of their work, offering support. We bear testimony that this very diverse group have worked with grace, humility and mutual respect. They have sought to 'stand in the shoes of the other', whether that be a colleague on the Working Group or someone making a submission. They were clear that nothing would stay in their report or recommendations if there was not a consensus between them that it should be there. We are indebted to each member of the Working Group and we thank them for their generosity of spirit and their example.

It is now appropriate that the Church discuss this report and if possible place it before Synods. We recognise that the Synod of the Diocese of Polynesia and many Hui Amorangi have already met but it is hoped that there will be time and ways to consider and offer feedback on the report. Working Group members have indicated their willingness and availability to explain and discuss aspects of their proposals if that is requested over the next few months.

The Working Group have presented this report in interim form. Responses and feedback are invited through Episcopal Units or Tikanga bodies; the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Polynesia, Te Runanganui or the Inter Diocesan Conference. This feedback should be to the General Secretary of this Church no later than 4:30pm Friday, 17 November 2017. Ultimately the final Working Group Report and its recommendations will go back to General Synod/ Te Hīnota Whānui in May 2018 for determining the way ahead.

We now prayerfully commit this report and its recommendations to you.

Yours in Christ,

**The Most Reverend Winston Halapua
Archbishop and Primate**

**The Most Reverend Philip Richardson
Archbishop and Primate**



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