

**Pastoral Note – to all clergy and all congregations
from Bishop Stuart Robinson.**

12 September 2017

Beloved in Christ,

I have been asked—on a great many occasions now—the view of the Anglican Church on the upcoming ‘postal vote’. I’ve stated that Anglicans hold a variety of positions on how marriage should be understood or defined, though I myself, as you know, subscribe to a traditional understanding. It may also be helpful for readers to get a sense of the ‘mind’ of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia (our national representative and legislative body) which, last week, resolved without dissent, the following:

16.21 Marriage, same-sex marriage and the blessing of same-sex relationships

Bishop Michael Stead moving, The Revd Canon Professor Dorothy Lee seconding:

The General Synod –

- (i) recognises that the doctrine of our church, in line with traditional Christian teaching, is that marriage is an exclusive and lifelong union of a man and a woman, and further,
- (ii) recognises that this has been the subject of several General Synod resolutions over the past fifteen years, and also
- (iii) recognises that the nature of marriage is the subject of ongoing conversation within the church and wider community and that we need to listen to each other with care and respect, and
- (iv) acknowledges the experiences and genuine concerns of LGBTIQ+ people within the church and the community, and therefore
- (v) asks the Doctrine Commission to facilitate a respectful conversation in our church by means of a collection of essays on marriage and same-sex relationships that explores Scriptural and theological issues relating to:
 - a. The doctrine of marriage expressed in the formularies of the Anglican Church of Australia,
 - b. Our current Australian context, exploring the relationship between the State’s definition of marriage and the church’s doctrine of marriage,
 - c. Key Old Testament and New Testament texts on sex, marriage and friendship,
 - d. Scripture and hermeneutics,
 - e. A theology of blessing,
 - f. A theology of desire,
 - g. Godly disagreement on this issue, and
 - h. The case for and against same-sex marriage and/or the blessing of same-sex unions.

I have been encouraging people to assist law makers in their decision making by voting when ballots arrive. Further, I have been calling people to prayer as we face the complexities of marriage, gender, equality, tradition and the consequences of decisions taken (intended or otherwise). You may wish to join me in praying for wisdom and grace in the words of the prayer set down for mid-October:

*Almighty God,
in your wisdom you have so ordered our earthly life
that we must walk by faith and not by sight:
give us such trust in your fatherly care
that in the face of all perplexities
we may give proof of our faith by the courage of our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Source: APBA [28], 465

For Jesus,

+Stuart

The Right Reverend Stuart P. Robinson
Bishop
Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn.