

It is interesting that on this, the Feast of Pentecost, and at the end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, that two significant bits of news this week are really about how even as an Anglican Communion we can struggle with our union and unity as the Church; Christ's body here on earth.

Firstly, there has been much sadness, confusion, and even anger coming from across the ditch over the past 48 hours. The week-long biennial meeting of the General Synod of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia has been in session. One of the most important debates was consideration of the report by the "Way Forward Working Group" on the blessing of same-sex marriages. This group has been meeting since the last Synod in 2014, and amongst its report were proposals for new liturgies for the blessing of civil marriages. In the case of New Zealand, this would include same-sex marriages, which have been lawful since 2013.

After several days of debate and discussion, however, the Synod voted to postpone the decision until 2018 "with a firm expectation that a decision to move forward will be made" at that time. The motion that was passed by the Synod also "establishes and commits to pray for a working group to be appointed by the Primates [of the province] to consider possible structural arrangements ... to safeguard both theological convictions concerning the blessing of same gender relationships." There is a strong sense that in this case, and in the decision reached, that unity has trumped justice for those Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (GLBTIQ) people within the church.

Other matters debated during the General Synod during the week included the issues of gender-based violence, child poverty, women's leadership, the housing crisis and welcoming refugees.

Our own Archbishop has, this week, been appointed to an international group which has as its own focus the unity of the church. Archbishop Freier has been appointed to a task group to "maintain conversation" among the Primates of the Anglican Communion, as requested during the Primates' Gathering and Meeting in Canterbury Cathedral in January. The Primates asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to establish the group as part of their commitment to "walk together" despite "deep differences".

The primates requested the group "with the intention of restoration of relationship, the rebuilding of mutual trust, healing the legacy of hurt, recognising the extent of our commonality and exploring our deep differences, ensuring they are held between us in the love and grace of Christ."

May Dunstan of Canterbury and all the Saints walk with you this week... *Sam*