

Press Release: Melbourne Anglicans Urge Diocese of Wangaratta “not to break the unity of the church”

[BEGINS]

A prominent group of Melbourne Anglicans comprising both senior clergy and lay people today issued an open letter to the Bishop of Wangaratta (the Rt Rev John Parkes and the synod (diocesan parliament) of the Diocese of Wangaratta urging them not to pull away from the rest of the Anglican Church of Australia by acting on their own in their upcoming synod meeting 30 & 31 August. Bishop Parkes has said he plans to ask the synod to approve the blessing of couples that have had same-sex marriages.

President of the New Cranmer Society, Kimberly Smith, (a layman and member of the church’s General Synod) said,

“We have urged the bishop and his synod not to proceed with this divisive course of action.

We recognise that the topic of marriage is a difficult one for our national church but there has been agreement amongst us to come to a decision together. This move by Bishop Parkes flies in the face of not only the view of the national church expressed at our General Synod, but also an agreement by the Australian bishops themselves not to act in this way. Bishop Parkes’ actions threaten the hard-won unity of the Anglican Church of Australia and so we urge him and his synod to reconsider his intentions and not to break the unity of the church”.

The full text of the open letter reads as follows:

An open letter to Bishop John Parkes and the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Wangaratta

Dear Bishop John, brothers and sisters,

It has been reported in the August edition of The Melbourne Anglican that you will be considering giving approval to a liturgy to enable the blessing of same-sex marriages at your upcoming meeting on August 30-31. We write to urge you not to approve such a liturgy.

We would like you to consider that approval of such a liturgy would:

- Be contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures (and of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 19 in particular) and the doctrine of marriage contained in the Book of Common Prayer and A Prayer Book for Australia.
- Be divisive to our national church, disregarding the clear decisions of the most recent General Synod and the bishops’ statement of 2018 that “the doctrine of this Church is that marriage is a lifelong union between a man and woman.”

- Pre-empt the process set in place for the national church to deal with this issue.

In view of this, out of concern for the truth of Christ, and in order to preserve the unity of the church, we plead with you in the name of Jesus Christ not to take this course, which would strain the fellowship between us to breaking point.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Smith
President New Cranmer Society
[On behalf of the Council of the New Cranmer Society]

[ENDS]

Background information:

The General Synod (national parliament) of the Anglican Church of Australia has repeatedly maintained its orthodox view on marriage as being between a man and a woman. Most recently they described the decision of the Scottish Episcopal Church to bless same-sex marriages as “contrary to the doctrine of our Church and the teaching of Christ” (2017 Resolution <https://anglican.org.au/the-general-synod/search-resolutions-of-gs-sessions/?sid=2851>).

In 2018 the bishops of the Anglican Church of Australia agreed, “The bishops commit to working together to manifest and maintain unity” (as reported at <http://davidould.net/the-australian-bishops-secret-marriage-agreement-published/>). Bishop John Parkes was one of those who made this agreement.

The New Cranmer Society is a fellowship of Anglicans in the Diocese of Melbourne committed to encouraging orthodox, biblical and effective ministry in the diocese and the Anglican Church of Australia.
www.newcranmer.org.au

For more details contact the New Cranmer President Mr Kimberly Smith 0414 307104