



Commitment 2020

Gafcon Australia's primary desire is for all the Dioceses of the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA) to remain faithful to our Lord by gladly holding to his teaching. We will do everything in our power to support orthodox leaders and to encourage dioceses to maintain fidelity to the Lord and his Word in light of the increasing societal changes especially in relation to marriage, human sexuality and other matters. Our understanding of "orthodox Anglican faith" is expressed in the [Jerusalem Declaration](#). We are part of the world-wide Gafcon movement that represents 70% of the world's worshipping Anglicans, that embraces evangelical, catholic and charismatic Anglicans, and women and men who are ordained.

In light of the Appellate Tribunal majority opinions on the [Wangaratta](#) and [Newcastle](#) questions,¹ we anticipate that some Diocesan Bishops may now allow blessings of same-sex marriages in their Dioceses. The Tribunal's majority opinion rests on a narrow understanding of "doctrine" in the Constitution and we believe this will encourage clergy to proceed with such blessings. If Bishops promote, or fail to stop this practice, then many orthodox Anglicans will find themselves unable to receive the oversight of their bishop.

We know that some bishops already have failed to discipline clergy for breaking biblical standards of conduct. Some dioceses have changed their official standards (through changes to *Faithfulness in Service*) to allow those who do not practise chastity in singleness to exercise ministry and leadership. We suspect that some of our bishops hold doctrinal positions that are contrary to the formularies of the Anglican Church of Australia.

We recognise that for some orthodox Anglicans these changes will be intolerable. Clergy and lay people will find they cannot accept the leadership and authority of their bishop in these situations and will not be able to submit to the resolutions of their Synods. We know that many Anglican clergy, lay people and congregations will feel they have no other choice than to disaffiliate from the Anglican Church of Australia because of these things.

We affirm the Jerusalem Declaration, which in section 13 says: 'We reject the authority of those churches and leaders who have denied the orthodox faith in word or deed'. In light of this, there are

¹ Regarding the constitutionality of a regulation for the Blessing of Persons Married According to the *Marriage Act 1961*, (Wangaratta) and the proposed Clergy Discipline Ordinance 2019 Amendment Ordinance 2019 (Newcastle).

at least five possible scenarios where faithful Anglicans will believe they can no longer accept the ministry of their bishop.

1. Where a Bishop no longer personally believes the doctrine of the ACA², (even though they might not act on this or require others to do so).
2. Where a Bishop fails to act in restraining or disciplining a clergy person from acting against the doctrine of the ACA.
3. Where a Synod adopts a resolution contrary to the doctrine of the ACA and a Bishop allows actions consistent with that resolution.
4. Where the ACA changes its doctrine or discipline to a position that is not biblical.³
5. Where a Bishop disciplines a clergyperson for acting consistently with the doctrine of the ACA.

Some clergy and lay people, in good conscience, will seek to disaffiliate from their diocese/bishop when they experience one of the scenarios above. Others will want to find a way forward within the structures of the ACA and will need support and assistance in engaging and responding to the bishop and diocese.

Gafcon Australia commits itself to supporting orthodox and faithful Anglicans in each of these situations. While we hope that none of this will be necessary, we make our commitment to do the following as need arises.

Proactively Promote Orthodox Anglicanism

1. Gafcon Australia will continue to host conferences to promote orthodox Anglican faith and provide fellowship and encouragement.
2. Gafcon Australia will encourage the development of local Gafcon groups in different locations for fellowship and support.
3. Gafcon Australia will continue to support and encourage orthodox Anglicans who choose to remain within the Anglican Church of Australia, even when their bishops have acted in an unorthodox manner.
4. Gafcon Australia will encourage orthodox Anglicans to remain part of the Anglican Church of Australia if they have an orthodox bishop, unless the ACA changes its doctrine.

Respond to specific issues

5. Where breaches of doctrine, discipline, faith and order occur, Gafcon Australia will encourage bishops to act in accordance with the doctrine of the Church.
6. Gafcon Australia will support Diocesan and Special Tribunals where applicable, to bring the disciplinary process to bear on bishops and clergy who do not uphold the doctrine of the ACA. We will resource, support and encourage people bringing charges in those forums.
7. Gafcon Australia will participate in any tribunal processes that are available to us, making submissions that uphold and promote the biblical doctrine of our Church. We will represent our members' interests in this.

² As it was commonly understood prior to the Appellate Tribunal majority Opinion on Wangaratta, as evidenced by the unanimous submission by the House of Bishops and the Board of Assessors.

³ For many, the recent Opinion of the Appellate Tribunal is an example.

8. Gafcon Australia Board members and Gafcon Ambassadors will maintain support and contact with Anglicans in dioceses in Australia who find themselves marginalised by the actions of their bishops.
9. If needed, Gafcon Australia will encourage other avenues for the maintenance of order in the Church, and the participation of orthodox Anglicans in our Dioceses through consideration of alternatives like "Alternative Episcopal Oversight" or agreed terms of separation.

Assist those who disaffiliate

10. Gafcon Australia will provide a Mentor for support and encouragement to congregations, clergy, or groups of Anglicans who are considering disaffiliation from their bishops and/or dioceses.
11. If a sufficient number of churches and clergy disaffiliate from the ACA, Gafcon Australia will seek the approval of the Gafcon Primates Council to establish an Extra-Provincial Diocese (EPD) for Australia authorised by the Gafcon Primates.
12. The Gafcon EPD will be a parallel jurisdiction with the existing Anglican Church of Australia and have a geographic spread across the whole country. It is not envisioned that this will include Anglicans from Dioceses where sound doctrine is upheld.
13. The Gafcon EPD will be governed by its own Constitution and Canons, appoint a Registrar, and will elect its own Bishop, who will ordain, license, and pastor its clergy and congregations.
14. The Gafcon EPD will establish links of communion with orthodox bishops and dioceses within the ACA, as well as among the Gafcon Global networks. It will seek to establish new churches in areas where there are few orthodox Anglican Churches.

What you can do

1. Pray for our Church, including your local vicar/rector, your diocesan leadership, General Synod representatives, and the Board of Gafcon.
2. If you are in leadership, commit to preaching and teaching faithfully and graciously "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), including those issues about which there is controversy.
3. Give financially, if you are able, to support the work of Gafcon. Details of how to do this are on our website [here](#).
4. Encourage others to sign up to support Gafcon. This can be done online [here](#).

We thank God for our partnership with you in the gospel and the fellowship we enjoy.

The Board of Gafcon Australia
December 2020