24 February 2022

A Message from the Archbishop

In recent weeks there has been a variety of responses to the appointment of the new Precentor to St George’s Cathedral. Some have been wholeheartedly congratulatory. Others have raised concerns regarding the appointment and the personal situation of the priest concerned.

Expressions of concern have also been raised with me regarding the personal family situations of two of those to be ordained deacon in the Diocese tonight.

In response to these matters I have met with members of EFAC (Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion), the Chair of EFAC, the Wardens of the Parish of Dalkeith, and in response to an invitation, I visited the Parish of Lockridge-Eden Hill to speak with the Rector and some members of the parish.

As well as these meetings, I have met with the Examining Chaplains, Bishops Kate and Jeremy, and talked with some of my fellow Bishops in other dioceses, including the Primate.

There are clear requirements in place for those seeking ordination in the Diocese of Perth. These include:
- six months in the Enquirers’ Program;
- separate, one-on-one meetings with individual Examining Chaplains;
- discernment by Examining Chaplains and others, including the Archbishop;
- evidence of safe ministry requirements being met;
- an invitation into the Formation Program, which is also dependent on the candidate meeting the Archbishop’s requirement of medical and psychological assessments;
- regular meetings with a spiritual director;
- undertaking ministry supervision in their field placements;
- completion of approved theological studies;
- completion of a Clinical Pastoral Education program.
At every stage, the requirements for ordination are made clear to all candidates.

There is no policy in the Diocese of Perth which excludes people from offering themselves to these rigorous processes of discernment if they believe themselves called by God to ordained ministry.

The discernment process is thus open to women and men; to single and married people; to heterosexual and same-sex-attracted people.

God is raising up leaders to reflect the diversity of our church, which includes people who bring the gifts of their life experiences, drawn from the complexity of the world around us. For example, we include people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; people who have lived through trauma, in Australia or in war-torn countries; people with disabilities, and many others. I thank God for calling people from across the entire spectrum of society for mission and ministry.

Now to some limitations. No-one in the Diocese of Perth can be ordained if they are married (under Australian Commonwealth Law) to a same-sex partner. The doctrine of marriage in the Anglican Church of Australia is clear. Some people who are not married do share a committed domestic arrangement with a person of the same sex. Such a person must be able to affirm to me that they commit themselves to living within the discipline of the Church, and in accordance with *Faithfulness in Service*, ‘taking responsibility for their sexual conduct by maintaining chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage’.

Prior to ordination, candidates take oaths and declarations specific to an ordained person, they commit themselves to be bound by the statutes and policies of the Diocese, and affirm their commitment to *Faithfulness in Service*.

I am confident that each of the ordination candidates who will be presented at tonight’s ordination service have met all of these requirements. Administering with mercy the discipline of Christ and of this Church means that I must, will, and do believe people’s word when they give it to me.

Some clergy have told me that they will feel their fellowship with me as their Bishop will be affected should I ordain or licence a person in a civil partnership. A civil partnership, such as is legally possible in England, for example, is not marriage. It does not fall under Australian definitions of marriage. It does not come under the doctrine of marriage held by the Anglican Church of Australia.
I am deeply grieved that our fellowship may be affected should I proceed to ordain or licence a person in a civil partnership formed in another part of the world. I am also deeply grieved by the level of gossip, assumption, generalisations and innuendo that has been circulating. It has led some members of our Church to feel targeted and unsafe. I ask all of us to speak with courtesy and discretion at all times.

When I was prayed for, in the consecration prayer in the Ordinal, the Church prayed for God to fill my heart with love of God and of God’s people. Love, as St Paul memorably describes it in 1 Corinthians 13, ‘is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.’ Loving God’s people means that as your Archbishop I bear, believe, hope and endure with all of you, lay and ordained, as you give me your word in many matters.

It is my intention to seek to continue to meet with all those who feel hurt in the complexity of our current circumstances. I have been grateful for the grace which has flowed in my meetings so far.

You know that I believe absolutely that God in Christ can and will hold us together. We are the Body of Christ. His Spirit is with us. As your Bishop, I will act with integrity, be true to the Canons and Statutes to which I have given assent, and use the authority to which I have been called in this office.

May God give each of us from his providence, the grace and mercy to live and minister in this season, and to live in the strength of his love in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Most Reverend Kay Goldsworthy AO
Archbishop