

## **A LITURGICAL LIFE AFFIRMING OUR COMMON LIFE**

### **GUIDELINES ON CORPORATE WORSHIP FOR CLERGY AND LAY LEADERS IN THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE**

#### **General**

We are blessed in this Diocese with the evident professionalism and commitment of the clergy and lay leaders. There are strong bonds of trust between the Bishop and those who exercise leadership in the parishes week by week.

These guidelines are intended to nurture our common life in part by outlining the boundaries we might observe as we recognise our differences and embrace practices of inclusivity. Our ordered worship or liturgies are a very visible expression of aspects of our identity and thus our diversity and our unity.

We should anticipate that we will be transparent with one another about our liturgical practices. We should look forward to ongoing gracious conversations about this aspect of our life.

As Anglicans we seek to engage in forms of common prayer. That is an approach to praying and worshipping where there is a sense of connectedness from one congregation to another across the Diocese and across the Anglican Church of Australia as a whole.

When the General Synod of this Church met in 2017 it adopted a tight process for authorising new liturgies. While more flexible than having the whole General Synod make the decisions, it was tighter than the Liturgy Commission had proposed. One of the signals in that deliberation was that the expectation remains that our worship life in this Church will be framed by authorised liturgies.

At the 2018 National meeting of Bishops there were some discussions about authorised liturgies including a reminder that Common Worship, while being used in a number of Dioceses, is not properly authorised for use in this Church. The Bishops will be discussing this further in 2019.

Alongside all of this, an important feature of our diocesan life has been to nurture occasions of gathering, conversation, reflection and hospitality in which people might explore the Christian faith. As we seek to invite people more deeply into Christian discipleship we have witnessed the introduction of liturgy into these occasions including celebrations of the Eucharist. We have also seen people enquire after baptism and confirmation in these settings as the settings have become their Christian community.

All of these conversations continue to have an impact on our thinking and cause us to reflect on our own practices.

The risk for any Diocesan Bishop in speaking about liturgy is that some people will feel restrained while other people will hope that their practices go unnoticed. Yet, it remains an important ministry for the Diocesan for which they can be accountable.

It has become very clear to me as I grow into the ministry of the Diocesan Bishop that, in holding our life together as a Diocese with its rich diversity and commitment to inclusivity, it will be important to be clear about what shapes our common life. All too often barriers between people can emerge because of liturgical differences which express theological differences. If we are to flourish by grace we will need to find common ground and, with generosity pursue, the common good.

## Principles

Gathering together to worship God, to hear the scriptures read and explained, to pray and to obey the command of Christ to share in the Eucharist has been a part of Christian practice since the very beginning of the Church. When we meet together, we endeavour to enable people to deeply, strongly and sincerely engage with all that is taking place. To aim for excellence in our gatherings means that our gatherings glorify God and are helpful to those who participate.

For the Anglican Church, the order of service we use are of particular importance because the Anglican Church is not a 'confessing church'. The Anglican Church upholds the catholic and apostolic faith of the ancient undivided church as refracted through the lens of the experience of the English reformation. The Anglican Church has a very limited range of formal statements of belief. In the Anglican Church of Australia, these are the Nicene and Apostles Creeds, the Articles of Religion and the Book of Common Prayer (1662). For the Anglican Church our doctrine is contained in and expressed by the orders of worship authorised by the General Synod processes. Our liturgy is very important in reflecting and communicating what we believe.

Because of this very important role, the Anglican Church has taken liturgy very seriously and seen it as something of the Church not individuals. The notion of 'common prayer' is important to us not so that attenders will always get the same no matter which Anglican service they attend (predictability) but so that the belief of the Church reflected in the liturgy is 'owned' and approved by the church as a whole.

## Authorised Liturgies in this Church

One of the features of clergy life is understanding that we have made a solemn commitment to only use authorised forms of service<sup>1</sup>. This commitment formally applies to all of our gatherings for corporate worship, the pastoral offices and specific individual ministries.

Liturgy which reflects particular themes or occasions can be very helpful in enabling people to worship and grow in discipleship of Christ. There is great flexibility permitted within the liturgies contained in An Australian Prayer Book and A Prayer Book for Australia. The APBA, in particular, offers a variety of services. The rubrics within the services offer even more options for variety.

Sometimes this flexibility is insufficient. The General Synod *Canon Concerning Services* allows clergy to make and use variations which are not of substantial importance in any form of authorised service according to particular circumstances. For example there are parts of Common Worship which can easily be used in our services under this provision. There is some important scope here which the bishops are very happy to explore with you.

A member of the clergy is also able to use forms of service they consider suitable for those occasions where an authorised service has not been provided; ANZAC Day services, for example.

All of this must occur within the framework that variations must be reverent, edifying and consistent with the doctrine of this Church. Again, there is some important scope here which the bishops are very happy to explore with you.

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<sup>1</sup> Liturgies authorised by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia are: The Book of Common Prayer (1662), An Australian Prayer Book (1978) and A Prayer Book for Australia (1995).

It is my expectation that the main gatherings for a congregation are fully consistent with an authorised liturgy at least once each Sunday as well as for the main Sunday occasion in which the Parish assembles. The liturgy for all gatherings must have an Anglican shape, embrace Anglican liturgical principles and be consistent with the doctrine of this Church.

The canonical structure of the church provides a way for the Diocesan Bishop to determine doctrine and for bishops to provide advice. There is also a means by which a permanent variation in an authorised liturgy can be authorised by a parish and the Bishop.

It is my desire that we have a degree of generosity for other congregational gatherings as we endeavour to get our liturgical settings right for 21<sup>st</sup> Century mission. Again whether it be Messy Church, a Mission or Night Prayer all of this must occur within the framework that variations must be reverent, edifying and consistent with the doctrine of this Church.

The bishops will anticipate that clergy will initiate conversations on a regular basis about parish liturgical practices and aspirations with a willingness on the part of the clergy to receive guidance and, on occasion, accept direction.

### **An inclusive environment**

Our liturgy is rich and has much depth. It is steeped in Scripture. However, increasingly we live in a society disconnected from Church culture. This means we have to work hard at making worship accessible for those who are new or who attend occasionally. Those who have the responsibility to prepare and lead worship have an important role in helping people to feel included and welcome.

We should seek to use non-exclusive language in our public worship. Readings from Scripture should be drawn from an inclusive language version such as the NRSV or the new inclusive version of the NIV. The choice of hymns and songs should also exercise this care.

While many of our older members understand the use of the masculine as inclusive, our younger members almost certainly will not. Their education has required the use of non-exclusive language. When done with sensitivity, the use of inclusive language is inconspicuous.

### **Authorisation to lead worship or preach.**

In light of our commitment to safety I need to restate some of the practices of long standing about those who can officiate or preach in any Church or any event under the auspices of the Diocese.

No clergy member may officiate or preach in any Church or at an event under the auspices of the Diocese without the licence or written permission of the bishop. Similarly, no lay person may conduct a service of worship or preach in a church or at an event under the auspices of the Diocese unless he or she holds the licence of the bishop or has received written permission from the bishop.

In all cases where an Incumbent desires a visiting clergy member to preach or officiate (other than a member of the clergy holding the Bishop's Licence or Permission to Officiate), permission should be sought from the Bishop before an invitation is issued to the member of the clergy concerned. The letter or email to the Bishop should indicate that the person to be invited as a clergy member is in good standing within his or her own diocese. Professional Standards checks will be completed prior to permission being given. These checks can take quite some time so advance notice will improve the likelihood of permission being granted.

Once the Assistant Bishops are in place, they will have the authority to grant the occasional permissions within their episcopates and ensure that each of the bishops is aware of the permissions given. These are matters of ensuring the church is a safe place. They do require careful attention and appropriate accountability.

### **Addresses in the place of sermon**

From time to time there is good reason for a person to be invited to speak to the congregation. This might be a report on Synod, telling the story of their faith, children's talks, exploring the vocation to Christian leadership and the like. This can occur in the presence of a licensed member of the clergy where the person is a member of the parish. They will be seen as a person exercising leadership in the parish so they should have a verified Working with Children Check unless they are aged under 18.

All addresses by people from outside the parish and/or the Diocese should be authorised by the Bishop or Assistant Bishop. There will be standing permissions for a number of groups such as members of the Cursillo Secretariat or SRE teachers speaking about their work.

### **Robing**

When we gather at Diocesan occasions there is a very powerful expression of our shared ministry by the practice of all clergy vesting (cassock & cotta, cassock & surplice or cass-alb) each with appropriate coloured stole, usually white. This will be the norm for the Synod Service, Commissioning of new clergy, Ordinations, and the Chrism Eucharist with renewal of ordination vows.

As part of our canonical structure we recognise the use of distinctive vesture when we lead divine service but also that the vesture worn may "vary from time to time and place to place".

It is diocesan practice to ensure, as part of clergy appointments, that incoming clergy will respect the existing traditions of the parish and the Diocese.

It is expected that there is at least one service in the morning in a parish where the customary robes are worn. In some parishes the clergy will be robed for all services. In other parishes, clergy will not robe for a variety of services.

When the Bishop or Assistant Bishops visit a parish they bring the diocese to the local as well as the local to the diocese. In balancing these conversations, the bishop and the local clergy will explore the appropriate robing practices for the episcopal visit. The final decision for each occasion will rest with the bishop who is visiting.

### **Creating an environment of dignity and reverence in which our focus is on God**

In keeping with the ancient and reformed traditions of the Church, the assembly of the faithful carries with it a solemnity that distinguishes it from other gatherings.

Within the Book of Common Prayer there are rubrics about posture aimed at expressing humility and gratitude as well as ensuring dignity and avoiding disorder.

With the age of some of our congregations and the change in furniture we now kneel less than we once did. The consequence is that we remain seated when historically we would have changed our posture to signify our honouring of God.

Our appropriate focus on building community, often in buildings designed with different purposes in mind, means that we have less spaces for personal silent prayer before and after corporate worship than we once did.

All of this means that the presiding minister must give careful attention to these dimensions in their overall liturgical leadership offering guidance and invitation to the congregation to embrace practices that might help them develop a rich devotional life.

### **Administration of the Holy Communion**

The bread used in Holy Communion must be wholesome and the wine fermented juice of the grape and of good quality. The Australian Bishops have affirmed the appropriateness of bread with no gluten. With the approval of the bishop, the wine offered to some of the communicants may be unfermented juice of the grape and of good quality.

It is normative and expected in this Church for communion to be administered in both kinds. It is also normative that people are invited to come forward to the ministers of communion.

The Book of Common Prayer rubric reminds us that sufficient bread and wine should be placed on the table for each Communion service.

The symbol and practice of the common cup remains an important element of the service of the Holy Communion. It is expected that the common cup will be available at all Communion services and that teaching about the common cup will form part of preparing people to receive Communion.

A significant group of Christians have known nothing other than individual cups for communion. Normally, the practice of individual cups should be focussed on those with genuine pastoral need.

There is increased anxiety in the Church about the safety of the Common Cup. This means we must ensure that the vessels are appropriate, in good condition and properly cleaned. They must be wiped properly each time a person receives communion.

If intinction is being offered, it should be provided from a chalice designated for this purpose and a minimum amount of wine should be used.

If there are consecrated elements remaining after the communion they may be kept safely in an aumbry approved for this purpose so that the ancient practice of taking the communion to the sick, who are not able to attend church, may be adopted.

If remaining bread and wine is not being kept to take to those who are ill they should be eaten and drunk reverently by the priest and/or communicants prior to the conclusion of the service or if quantities of consecrated wine remain and it is not convenient to drink the wine it may, following ancient practice, be poured reverently on the ground.

I would appreciate it if the administration of Communion might form part of the conversation with the bishops from time to time.

### **Adult baptism and confirmation**

We are likely to experience more adults coming to faith and seeking to be initiated into Christian life.

Clergy should ensure that these adults are presented to a bishop for confirmation, reception or reaffirmation as part of an episcopal visit. An indication of the visits for the following year will be available in November of each year.

The visiting bishop will be happy to baptise these adults prior to confirmation. However, if the clergy form the pastoral judgement that the baptism should occur sooner, they are authorised to do so.

It is essential that we take the education, formation and nurture of new Christians seriously.

### **Lights and smoke**

It is now common in the community to provide warnings at events where strobe or laser lighting is used or when dry-ice smoke is used. These warnings occur because people experience slight or significant health impacts from them.

The advent of technology has meant that we are more familiar with different and varying technologies to create an aesthetic experience which provides assistance to personal and corporate devotion. The

As we learn from the community experience, we recognise that contemporary services using different approaches to lighting need to exercise special care. Parishes using incense often have the custom of letting people know at which services it will be used. There are people who for health reasons choose not to attend services where incense is used.

It has been represented to me strongly that when we meet for diocesan occasions that those who for health reasons struggle with incense either cannot attend or need to withdraw during thanksgiving prayer. For many in the Diocese the sensory experiences given with incense are an important aid to worship and devotion. In the future, I will advise more clearly when incense is being used at Diocesan services. Additionally, there will be services when it is not used.

### **Episcopal Visits and Special Occasions**

The arrangements for Parish visits will be made by the Bishop's Executive Assistant.

To initiate arrangements for additional visits and special occasions please contact her. She will work with the Bishop and the Assistant Bishops in this planning.

The visiting bishop will normally preside and preach at Communion services. The visiting bishop will normally preach, absolve and bless at other services.

As the president of liturgy, the visiting bishop should have the opportunity to review and confirm the order of service at least two weeks prior to the visit.

+Peter, Newcastle  
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