

ANGLICAN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATORS

INAUGURAL MEETING

The network was established following a nation-wide meeting of those involved in the discernment and selection process, and in the vocational training and formation of, candidates for ordination within the Anglican Church of Australia, convened in Melbourne (at Trinity College Theological school) from 2-4 July 2017. The purpose of the inaugural meeting was to discuss matters of mutual concern and interest, to establish and renew relationships with one another, and to share information and resources. Many present desired to meet again the following year, and application was made, and subsequently granted, for network status with the General Synod Standing Committee.

PURPOSE

The network serves the following functions and purposes:

- A data base with contact details, enabling members to be added and removed easily at their own request, and to facilitate contact with one another;
- The sharing of resources, with a view to commending best practice;
- An annual meeting to be hosted in turn by a different Province of the Anglican Church of Australia, with representatives of dioceses within that Province working together to arrange the venue and generate an agenda.

PERSONNEL

The network is intended to be open-ended and inclusive of all working broadly in the ministry formation and development of candidates for ordination and clergy. It encompasses those working in areas such as the discernment, training and formation of prospective and new clergy, and those involved in all aspects of the ordination pathway and process.

Those attending and presenting have included:

- Diocesan directors of theological education and equivalent positions;
- Those involved in the formation, training and development of lay ministers and ministries;
- Faculty of theological colleges;
- Examining Chaplains;
- Consulting psychologists and others involved in the selection process for new clergy;
- Diocesan bishops and assistant bishops who perform these, and related, roles;
- Representatives of 17 dioceses have attended one or more meetings since 2017.

ACTIVITIES

The network has convened on three occasions.

2017 - The inaugural meeting was held in Melbourne. Presentations were made on 'Screening of candidates and related issues in light of the Royal Commission'; 'Fostering vocations'; 'An online data base for reporting'; 'Reporting and Interview techniques'; 'The academic requirements for ordination'; 'The formational requirements for ordination'; and 'Context based learning (Insights from the St Milletus model in the Church of England)'.

2018 - The network convened in Brisbane. Presentations were made by Archbishop Philip Aspinall – 'Some possibilities for the future of theological education'; Robyn Murray –

'Psychological assessments in the Diocese of Brisbane', and The Rev'd Penelope Jones – 'Ministry formation in the Diocese of Brisbane'.

Three groups were formed to further discuss the following areas:

- The minimum requirements for ordination
- Pioneer ministry
- Rural issues

A recommendation was made for a policy position to be drafted on a national approach to the selection, screening and training of candidates for ordination, drawing on the plenary discussion concerning the minimum requirements for screening and the group discussion regarding the minimum requirements for ordination.

2019 - The network convened in Sydney. A presentation was made on 'the Discernment process in the Diocese of Sydney' by The Revd Gary O'Brien. Two sessions were then facilitated by guest presenter, The Revd Dr Canon Stephen Spencer, Director for Theological Education at the Anglican Communion Office, on 'Clergy Formation' and Education for Discipleship'.

KEY WORK AREA

The network was asked by memorandum of the Standing Committee to consider a response to Recommendation 16.4 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, that the Anglican Church develop a national approach to the selection, screening and training of candidates for ordination. The Network did so in both a plenary and group session at its 2018 meeting. The working draft was subsequently refined following distribution after the meeting. In considering this response, the Network referred to the prior work of a number of other bodies, in particular documents produced by the Safe Ministry Commission and the Ministry Commission, as well as the relevant Canons.

FURTHER MEETINGS

It was envisaged that the network would convene for a meeting in Perth in 2020, to consider matters arising from the June 2020 session of General Synod in relation to Recommendation 16.4 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. This meeting was postponed and a further attempt to convene the meeting in 2021 was not able to proceed.

It is hope the Network can be convened following the 2022 meeting of the General Synod for later in the year, for a meeting either in person or online, to consider matters relevant to theological education arising out of the Synod.