

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ANGLICAN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AUSTRALIA (ACARLA)

Composition

ACARLA is an annual gathering of the leaders of each of the recognised Religious Communities within the Anglican Church of Australia and two bishops and two others nominated by the House of Bishops. At present the bishops are Bishop Kate Wilmot, assistant bishop in the Diocese of Perth and Bishop Garry Weatherill, Bishop of Ballarat. The other two appointed members are Mrs Joy Freier, and The Rev'd Marilyn Hope.

Until 2021, the bishop overseeing Religious Communities and a representative from a New Zealand/Aotearoa/Polynesia Religious Community have attended. The Community of the Transfiguration, a Baptist based Religious Community based at Teesdale, just west of Geelong, is also invited to send a member of their leadership group.

Meetings

ACARLA gathers once a year for a two part meeting.

On the first day the leaders (or nominated delegates) from each recognised religious community in Australia gather for an *in camera* meeting.

On the second day all members of ACARLA meet to offer oversight, to respond to issues raised by the leaders group, to review each community, to review the growth of new communities and the register of Consecrated Single People.

We have met at the Community of the Holy Name, Cheltenham in 2018, 2019 and 2020 for face to face meetings. In 2021 and 2022 ACARLA met by ZOOM.

Significant Changes

The Community of Christ the King (CCK)

The last vowed Sister died in 2020 and the Community House was closed and the property transferred to another religious organisation. The Oblates of that former Community have continued to meet in two groups, one based in Melbourne and the other in Adelaide. They are discerning a path forward that would enable them to continue something of the life and ethos of CCK. This discernment is ongoing.

The Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM)

There are 4 remaining Life Professed brethren in Australia. After more than a decade of exploration, SSM has now restructured to ensure that the remaining brethren have the resources to continue their vocational lives. The new structural arrangement means that the current Provincial (not a vowed member) and Board have oversight of the financial resources and are able to make funds available that meet the evangelistic and missional charism of the Society.

The Society of the Sacred Advent (SSA)

The death of Mother Eunice in the second half of 2021, means that there are now only two Sisters remaining. Some time ago the Sisters made arrangements with their Schools to enable the charism of SSA to be preserved, but relinquishing governance responsibilities. They left the Community House at Albion and joined a retirement community, where the remaining Sisters continue a life of prayer. The Sisters have planned and established a "Transitional

Chapter” including lay and clerical members who are committed to discerning how the ministry and mission of SSA might continue in a new shape.

The Little brothers of St Francis

Three Franciscan Brothers who live by Francis' Rule for Hermits continue to live in simplicity in the bush in the Diocese of Grafton. In spite of fire and flood, they continue their lives with joy and simplicity, however they have decided to withdraw from the annual ACARLA meetings, but will continue to correspond with ACARLA.

New Initiatives

At St Francis College, Brisbane, an experiment in limited time Religious Community, modelled on the Archbishop of Canterbury's Community of St Anselm, has been living and exploring an annually based religious commitment for younger people. Structural and vocational discernment continues.

A small group of Melanesian Brothers came to Shepparton (Diocese of Wangaratta) 4 years ago. They found the cultural and especially the climatic differences from their homelands very difficult, but have recently moved to the Diocese of North Queensland, where they are offering evangelistic ministry under their limited tenure Rule. They bring the great openness and enthusiasm of the Melanesian Brothers and Sisters to the life of our Church.

The interest in Single Consecrated Life continues to grow slowly. At present there are 8 recognised SCL persons under ACARLA's care and under the oversight of bishops.

The Right Reverend Lindsay Urwin, Vicar of Brunswick Parish in the Diocese of Melbourne has been elected as Superior of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, a small worldwide dispersed community of Anglican men, lay and ordained who live a quite strict Rule of regular prayer, celibacy, and accountability of life.

A small group of ACARLA members, under the leadership of Brother Christopher John SSF, Minister General of the Society of St Francis, will be present as a chaplaincy team to the General Synod this year. They will be a prayerful presence, helping with the liturgical life of the Synod and offering gentle and compassionate chaplaincy services to members of the Synod. ACARLA hopes that this will be a visible way for the wider Anglican community to experience the prayerful concern of the Religious in our Church for our ongoing life, mission and ministry.

Membership

In the last few years membership of ACARLA has remained stable, however new communities or communities in formation sometimes ask if they can formally receive “recognition” by ACARLA. Each application is treated seriously, usually over the course of several meetings.

The Rt Rev'd Garry Weatherill
Chair of ACARLA