

*The Diocesan Governance Policy requires diocesan organisations, leadership and governors to pursue the purposes of the organisation in a manner which is consistent with the doctrine of the Diocese. For this reason, the Archbishop in Council has prepared this statement as a succinct statement of that doctrine, without making a claim to be exhaustive or comprehensive.*

## **The Doctrine of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney**

The Anglican Diocese of Sydney is a diocese within the Anglican Church of Australia and so in legal terms its doctrine is determined by the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling Principles in its Constitution.

The Fundamental Declarations affirm

1. The Christian Faith as professed by the Church of Christ from primitive times and in particular as set forth in the creeds known as the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed.
2. All the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
3. The commitment to obey the commands of Christ, teach His doctrine, administer His sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, follow and uphold His discipline and preserve the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons in the sacred ministry.

The Ruling Principles retain and approve 'the doctrine and principles of the Church of England embodied in the Book of Common Prayer together with the Form and Manner of Making Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, and in the Articles of Religion sometimes called the Thirty-nine Articles'. They further go on to declare 'that the above-named Book of Common Prayer, together with the Thirty-nine Articles, be regarded as the authorised standard of worship and doctrine in this Church'.

As a summary of the core commitments found in this body of doctrine, the Diocese of Sydney has produced the following Statement of Faith:

1. I believe
  - (a) that all the canonical scriptures of the books of the Old and New Testaments are the ultimate rule and standard of faith given by inspiration of God and contain all things necessary to salvation,
  - (b) in the Christian faith as professed by the church of Christ from primitive times, and in particular as set forth in the creeds known as the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed, and
  - (c) that there is only one way to be reconciled to God which is through his Son, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and was raised for our justification, and that we are justified before God by faith only.
2. I also believe that all the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct and am personally committed to living in obedience to the commands of Christ.

No one has the right to bind the human conscience more tightly than the written word of God and so all doctrine recognised as an expression of the doctrine of the Diocese of Sydney must be tested against a plain, grammatical and contextual reading of the teaching of the whole Bible.

On the basis of Scripture and in conformity with the Creeds and the Anglican formularies (the 39 Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, the Ordinal and the Homilies), the doctrine of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney includes:

### **1. God**

The one true and living God exists eternally in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These persons are inseparable as the one God but they are not to be confused, nor are they interchangeable. This God alone is worthy of all glory, honour and worship.

### **2. Christ**

The eternal Son assumed a genuine human nature in the womb of the virgin Mary in order to save his people from their sins. The personal union of a genuine human nature to the divine Word is what enabled the sovereign

and eternal God to bear the judgment rightly deserved by human beings and to effectively deal with that judgment. He is supreme over all creation, the one true priest who is the head of the church, and the goal of all things is to be united under his Lordship.

### **3. Holy Spirit**

The Spirit of God, who is also spoken of in Scripture as the Spirit of Christ, brings human beings to new birth and faith, enabling them to confess God as Father and Jesus Christ as Lord. He brings all things to their completion and gifts the church for its ministry in the world.

### **4. Creation**

All that exists apart from God was created by God. God created all things good, and he sustains and directs all things. Life, in particular, is not intrinsic to created things, but is granted to them as a precious gift from God. God therefore has a direct and absolute right to govern and direct all his creatures. He has gifted human creatures with unique freedom and responsibility, yet they remain accountable to the Creator who made all people. He, as Creator, determines the boundaries of appropriate behaviour in the world he has made.

### **5. Revelation and Scripture**

God has made himself known to his creatures. He does this in a general, universal and yet limited way to all his creatures through the created order itself. More specifically, he has spoken through the prophets and apostles in his word. Through the conscious, free, and creative use of their God-given gifts, God moved those he had set apart to record his word in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible is the written word of God, the final authority in all matters of Christian thought and behaviour. Together, the various books of the biblical canon, with their different contexts, authors, genres and styles, provide us with a unified account of God's character and purpose, centred on the person and work of Jesus Christ. What the Bible teaches is true, accessible, effective and sufficient for the purposes for which God has given it.

### **6. Humanity**

God created human beings in his own image in the form of two biological sexes – male and female. The Bible never endorses a divergence between biological sex and gender identity or expression. All human beings are equal in value and dignity regardless of race, sex, or social position. Each human being is precious to God and known by him from conception to the grave, and our lives belong to him. All human beings, individually and collectively, have a responsibility to care for the creation, make use of it, and rule it under God's authority. God's creative intention is that human beings should multiply and fill the earth. For this purpose he created marriage, a life-long exclusive union between a man and a woman, as the only appropriate context for human sexual activity. Outside of marriage God's intention for human beings is chastity. This is God's good design.

### **7. Sin and its effects**

Stemming from the first act of unbelief and rebellion in the Garden, every human being has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Every human faculty has been warped by sin and the entire creation has been corrupted and is in bondage to decay. Not only are we all subject to temptation and misdirected desire, but we cause others to sin against God and against each other. In a variety of ways we harm ourselves and each other and so human life on this side of the Fall is a mixture of joy and suffering. From the beginning, the consequence and penalty of sin is death. God has fixed a day on which he will judge all people by Jesus Christ, the Judge he has appointed. All are lost without the means of salvation that God has provided and are unable to save themselves. Everything contrary to the express will of God made known to us in Scripture is sin.

### **8. Salvation**

God's own sovereign love, his continuing commitment to the creatures he has made, and the promises given in the Old Testament, led him to provide the salvation all human beings need from sin and its consequences but cannot achieve for themselves. He accomplished this by sending his Son to take on our nature as the man Jesus Christ. His was a full and entire human nature and through it he lived the sinless life that none of us have lived and died the death that our sins deserve. His resurrection was his victory over sin and death and secures the gift of new life for all who are his.

### **9. The gospel**

The gospel is the joyful message of the reign of Jesus and the salvation he has accomplished and the summons to repentance and faith that arises from that message. It is a message of salvation freely offered but

secured at great cost. It is a call to come to Jesus, trusting him and what he has done and beginning a new life as one following him. In him alone is the forgiveness of our sins, reconciliation with God and adoption into his family, and eternal life. God uses the proclamation of this gospel to draw people to Jesus and include them in his salvation.

## **10. Justification only by faith**

The person and work of Christ provides the basis and ground of salvation offered freely to all who will come to him in faith, which is itself a gift of God. By nature we stand condemned, but there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We are justified—declared to be in the right with God—not on the basis of anything we have done, but because Jesus' death is an effective atonement and his righteousness has been imputed to us.

## **11. The continuing work of the Spirit in us**

Jesus meets us sinners wherever we are, but in his love he does not leave us there. By the work of his Spirit indwelling us, we are being transformed into the image of his Son. The Spirit awakens faith in us, renews our mind, writes God's law on our hearts, and causes us both to put off our old way of life and to put on a new life of repentance, faith and obedience. He also awakens in us a commitment to each other, encouraging us to seek the welfare of each other and to pursue love and good deeds.

## **12. The church**

God does not save us as isolated individuals. He calls us together as his people. The church is a gathering of God's people, drawn together by his Spirit around his word, manifesting on earth the unity of believers around Christ that is the ultimate heavenly reality. It is a fellowship in Christ which may have different complexions and arrangements in different places, but upholds bonds of love, fellowship and responsibility that extend beyond each local instance of 'church'.

## **13. Orders of Ministry**

The Scriptures provide for a variety of models of ministry, leadership and governance in and among the churches. Anglicans have embraced the model that has local congregations led by a presbyter and assisted by deacons, under the oversight of a bishop, a senior pastor who is responsible to order ministry and defend the faith. Bishops do not constitute the church, but they are provided for the welfare of the church.

## **14. The life and mission of the church**

When God's people gather in a local congregation, Christ is present in their midst by his word and in his Spirit. The ministry of the word is central to the Christian gathering. The church responds to Christ's presence in prayer, praise and the loving service of each other. The sacraments—baptism and the Lord's Supper—are Christ's gifts, visible words by which the gospel is proclaimed among his people. Baptism is based on God's promise of cleansing and new life and is appropriately extended to the children of believers. The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the gospel, a remembrance and assurance of Jesus' death for the forgiveness of sins, a fellowship meal for those who have been saved, and an anticipation of the great banquet Christ will share with his people on the last day. The mission of the church is to manifest the wisdom of God to those in the heavenly places, as its members stir up one another to love and good works and are equipped for their part in God's mission to the world.

## **15. The end times and Christian hope**

Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension ushered in the last days. At a time that only the Father knows, Jesus will return physically to liberate the creation from its bondage to decay and bring all things to their fulfilment. All will be raised bodily and appear before the Lord at the promised final judgment, some to go away to eternal punishment but the righteous to eternal life. Evil, sin and suffering will be dealt with forever. Those who have persevered in faith by the work of the Spirit will be vindicated and brought into the eternal joy of God's presence that Jesus has prepared for them.

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