

◀ We can truly be the safe place for all people that we have been talking about and working towards.

We get to choose how we behave in times like this. My own choice is to be with you in this process; to pray diligently for us as a parish, a

diocese and for our wider national church. My choice is to genuinely love all people; as far as is possible for me. (Please let me know if I slip up on this.)

May we Follow Jesus and Build Community even in this controversy – especially in this.

10.45am Sunday Service Computer Operator - Are you comfortable with computer work? We are looking for volunteers to do run the computer. Training will be given. Ph. 544 0460 Margaret Martin or the office for more information.

Family in Need - Christmas time can be really hard for low income families who already struggle to make ends meet. One such family is a solo mum and daughter who at present are not able to have Christmas because of costs. Mum has significant health costs as well. If anyone would like to contribute to a Christmas parcel I know it would be humbly and gratefully received. Because of specific dietary needs any donations or vouchers for Fruit and veggies, meat, petrol voucher or K Mart voucher are the things most needed. Please call Nikki 5445314 or 027 3789085 or church office by 17 December.

Wensley House Ministry - Every Thursday we take a service of some kind at Wensley House. We could do with another person to be available to take a Bible Study, please talk to Yvonne if that sounds like you. Yvonne Smyth - Elder Care Team Leader

Travelling? - If anyone is returning to Richmond from Christchurch around 10 January and would be able to give me a lift, please contact Deb on 027 345 8963. I am happy to pay towards petrol.



Grace in the midst of controversy

The Anglican Communion, our province (Aotearoa and Pacifica) and our Nelson Diocese has been discussing and praying about the issue of homosexuality for some years now. More specifically we have discussed gay marriage, same sex relationship blessings and the ordination of practicing gay people. There has been a lot of talk and no decisions have been made.

One very great concern in the midst of all this is that of church unity. No-one wants to leave, or be pushed out, of the Anglican family. No one.

On the 10 March 2018 our Diocese will have a one day Special Synod. The sole purpose of that meeting is to discuss Motion 29.

Motion 29 will be discussed at General Synod, I think in April. Our Diocesan General Synod representatives will present the views of our Diocese. It has been formulated by a group chosen by General Synod. That group has included our Bishop Richard.

Our Parish Synod representatives will represent your views at the Diocesan One Day Synod in March. That means we need to know what you think about Motion 29.

At this point most of you will not even have heard of it.

Simply put, Motion 29 is a pragmatic suggestion, to our national church, of a way to deal with the blessing of same-sex relationships. The suggestion aims to hold together our national church in the midst of widely-differing viewpoints.

Motion 29 suggests that clergy be allowed to bless same sex relationships in dioceses where their bishop gives permission. No one will be forced to conduct same sex blessings if they believe it is wrong. No one will be permitted to carry out same sex marriages.

Same sex marriage is not addressed in this motion. Neither is the ordination of practicing homosexuals.

For some people Motion 29 is one step too far. For others it doesn't go anywhere far enough. We all have different opinions and theologies on the bigger issues. We all have people we love who are affected by the bigger issues too.

As I wrote above, our Synod Representatives represent you at the upcoming One Day Synod.

They do not represent themselves. Our Synod Representatives are John Palmer, Dave Pritchard and Michaela Ross.

Over the next 3 months our parish will go through a process of information and feedback about Motion 29. We are taking it seriously because if it does not go through, it is very likely indeed, that our national church will split. (After years of arguments many, from both ends of the spectrum, are tired and want something resolved.)

Our Diocese has put out some information to give us very useful background; historical, theological and pastoral. This can be found on the internet: www.nelsonanglican.org.nz/diocese-resources - you need to scroll down to Motion 29 near the bottom. There you will find 5 video clips and 4 documents. All are useful. Please do access them if you can.

We probably won't be printing out the documents because most of them are quite long. However we will be copying the video clips on to discs so you can view them at home very soon. In early February we will be showing them at parish meetings. These will include a variety of times so that everyone is able to attend.

Vestry agreed last night that we will offer two ways for you to give your feedback on Motion 29 to us. They are either by way of written submission or simply talking to the Synod reps or to myself as your Vicar. (The written submission forms will be simple and we will limit the number of words to 300.)

We'll be asking for your feedback early next year. In the meantime please do look at the videos and read the documents if you can access the internet. And please do give myself or the Synod reps feedback on the process we have suggested.

Most of all please try not to worry. Jesus said we are to 'let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day'. We will endeavour to take his advice and take one step at a time.

But do please pray. Pray especially for those you disagree with. Pray for our church unity (local and national) and witness to Christ.

This situation presents a huge challenge for us a parish. It also presents a huge opportunity. We can show God's grace and love to each other in ways that we have never needed to before. We can choose to work through this complicated, sometimes divisive issue, in ways that honour and esteem everyone. ►