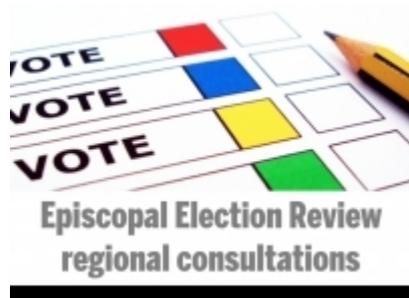


CHOOSING OUR NEXT BISHOP



Fri 15 July 2016

For almost 150 years our Bishop has been chosen by the Synod. The members of the Synod are responsible for seeking out candidates and then electing the new Bishop at a specially convened meeting.

Until towards the end of last century this was the way most Australian Anglican dioceses chose their Bishop. More recently many dioceses have adopted different methods. Our Synod has discussed this question at recent meetings but has not attempted to reach a conclusion on the desirability for change or the method we might adopt.

The discussions have been initiated by the Episcopal Election Review Committee chaired by Greg Mills. At the 2014 Synod the Committee conducted a survey of Synod members. Almost 80% agreed or strongly agreed that the current process needs to be improved.

Synod members and candidates identified the following flaws in our current electoral system:

- lack of transparency regarding names of candidates nominated (creating the potential to miss out on good candidates);
- excessive pressure and expectations on nominators in managing and promoting candidacies;
- lack of information for Synod to “really get to know” the candidates;
- challenges in ensuring a “level playing field” for all candidacies; and
- the risk of harm to and need for better pastoral protection of candidates.

Over the last 30 years most dioceses have reviewed the way they choose their Bishop. The most significant change is to move the decision from the Synod to a committee elected by the Synod. Eleven of the 23 dioceses (including the Dioceses of Brisbane and Perth) have adopted this approach. The 12 which maintain a Synod-based approach use three different methods:

- One Diocese (Sydney) continues to nominate and elect from within the Synod.
- In six dioceses, including the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, a committee assists Synod members to prepare the nominations and the Synod then chooses from all the nominations.
- In four dioceses, including the Dioceses of Melbourne and Adelaide, the Synod elects a committee which prepare a short list of nominations from which the Synod makes its choice.

In 2015 Synod was presented with a report which was underpinned by the guiding principles endorsed by Synod members in the 2014 survey and which outline five options for reviewing

the method of choosing our bishop. A full copy of that report is available through the Diocesan website, however in brief the options are:

Option 1: Synod nominates and elects (co-ordinated by a committee). This is the current system.

Option 2: Synod nominates and elects (assisted by a committee).

Option 3: Committee seeks all candidates who are then brought to Synod for election.

Option 4: Committee seeks all candidates and then one or more are nominated to Synod for election.

Option 5: Committee chooses nominations and elects a Bishop.

In order to discern which of these options Synod may wish to adopt there are three threshold questions which need to be answered:

Question 1: Should the decision be made by the Synod as a whole or by a committee elected by the Synod?

Question 2: If it wishes to continue a Synod-based election, should the Synod retain the responsibility for making nominations, assisted by a Committee?

Question 3: Alternatively, should the Synod elect a committee to seek out nominations from which, after due consideration, the Committee brings a short list to the Synod – from which the Synod proceeds to choose a Bishop?

At the coming Synod in September the Episcopal Election Review Committee will be seeking guidance on the answer to these questions. If the Synod can agree in principle on the method, the Committee will make recommendations to the following Synod in 2017 on the detail of the new approach which will be the basis for a new Ordinance to be voted on at that time.

In order to help Synod members understand the issues, the Committee is holding consultations around the diocese to discuss these options to improve the process of choosing a bishop. They have also established **a website with additional information.**

Consultations will be held in **Goulburn** on Saturday 16th July 2016 at 2.00pm in the Mary Thomas Room at St Saviour's Cathedral and

Sunday 17th July 2016 at 2.00pm at St Paul's **Narooma.**

Sunday 24th July 2016 at 3.00pm in the Parish Centre at St John's **Wagga Wagga**

Wednesday 27th July 2016 at 7.30pm in the small Parish Hall at All Saints' Ainslie in **Canberra**