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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Contrasting Approaches to Managing the Debate on Same-Sex Blessing and Same-Sex Marriage in New Zealand and Australia: Applying Insights from Jungian Psychological Type Theory

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## Abstract

In October 2022 the Church of England commissioned an examination of the impact of the debate on same-sex blessing and same-sex marriage within other Anglican Churches. The examination involved a literature search, an original survey among key informers and a general internet search. This paper draws on the general internet search to contrast the impacts in New Zealand and Australia. Drawing on Jungian psychological type theory, this analysis employs the contrasting decision-making functions of feeling (concerned with subjective interpersonal values) and thinking (concerned with objective logical analysis). The data suggest that the feeling approach dominant in New Zealand, which prioritized offering space and time for those of differing opinions to meet together, reported more positive outcomes than the thinking approach dominant in Australia, which gave greater priority to adversarial debate.

**Keywords:** Anglican; church of England; homosexuality; same-sex blessing; same-sex marriage

## Introduction

This paper has its origins in research commissioned by the Church of England as part of its Living in Love and Faith initiative (see Church of England, 2020, 2022). It was intended to help the Next Steps Group of bishops as they deliberated on the issues of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage to discern the way forward for the Church of England. The aim was to gather information on the effect on other

Anglican Churches of the debate to allow marriage (or blessing of civil marriages) between couples of the same sex. The report was submitted to the bishops at the close of 2022. We are not aware of the impact that the report may have had on the bishops, but as we have continued to reflect on the data generated, we suspect that it may be of wider interest and could be employed to illuminate the consequence of different approaches to the decision-making process. The commission involved three exercises: a literature review, an original survey among key informers and a general internet search, including church website posts, synod papers, newspaper reports, social media posts, etc. The present paper focuses on the general internet search. The original survey among key informers is reported by Village (*in press*).

The internet searches were conducted between August and November 2022. At that time there were 32 countries where same-sex marriage was legally recognized (from January 2024 this will rise to 35, see: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/marriage-equality-around-the-world>). The project focused on seven Churches within the Anglican Communion. Three of these had approved same-sex marriage: the Episcopal Church (USA), the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil. Three others had permitted their clergy to officiate at blessing services for couples in same-sex civil unions: the Anglican Church of Canada, the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia and the Church in Wales. The seventh Church included, the Anglican Church of Australia, is more complex since the Constitution gives all the power to the dioceses. While the General Synod may make decisions on such issues, dioceses have no obligation to follow those decisions.

At the heart of the debate for the Anglican Communion is the challenge of whether the Church can avoid widespread fragmentation and contain both progressive and conservative views on marriage within the one church structure. For those who take a progressive stance, it is an issue in providing equality for those church members who are in same-sex relationships, alongside a wish to respond with pastoral sensitivity to requests to marry or to have a union blessed. They view the provision of marriage or services of blessing for same-sex couples as transformative for both the Church and Christianity. Those who take a conservative stance, on the other hand, want to hold to what they see as the biblical understanding of marriage, viewing provision of same-sex blessing and same-sex marriage as the result of increasing secularization in society and an unacceptable accommodation of contemporary culture and ideologies. They warn that Churches moving in this direction risk dividing the Anglican Communion. This diversity of strongly held views also reflects widespread cultural divides, with many Anglican Provinces being in countries where same-sex relationships are illegal and/or same-sex marriages are prohibited.

### **Research Question**

What has caught our attention in the experiences of these provinces is the contrast within some continents whereby one province has emerged with a more eirenic solution than the other: Australia compared with New Zealand, and the USA compared with Canada. In his analysis of data provided by key informers, Village (*in press*) concluded that ‘provinces that had space and time for those of differing

opinions to meet together tended to report more positive outcomes than those where processes were dominated by synodical debates' (p. 1). Further reflection suggested the possibility of a pattern that could be illuminated by applying lenses shaped by Jungian psychological type theory. The present reanalysis of the data generated by the general internet searches has been designed to test the usefulness of these Jungian lenses in contrasting the experience in New Zealand and Australia. Both provinces have permitted clergy to bless couples in same-sex civil unions.

### **Introducing Psychological Type Theory**

Psychological type theory, as proposed by Jung (1971), distinguishes between two core mental processes that Jung styles the perceiving process and the judging process. For Jung perceiving is the irrational process concerned with gathering information, and judging is the rational process concerned with evaluating information. Jung's observation of human behaviour suggested that each of these two processes was implemented by two contrasting functions. While optimal human functioning relies on applying both of the contrasting functions within each process, Jung observed that individuals tend to have an innate predisposition for one of these over the other and consequently develop and become more skilled in their preferred function. The two perceiving functions were styled sensing and intuition, and the two judging functions were styled thinking and feeling.

Since the present study is concerned with examining the decision-making processes whereby the provinces reached their position on same-sex blessing and same-sex marriage, the focus of this study is on the two contrasting lenses of thinking and feeling. In Jungian psychological type theory, these two terms take on a technical meaning that needs clarification against other colloquial uses of these terms. Jung speaks of both thinking and feeling as *rational* functions, functions that are differentiated by the grounds on which decisions are reached. For thinking types, priority is given to objective logic and analysis. For feeling types, priority is given to subjective personal and interpersonal values. Thinking types strive for truth. Feeling types strive for harmony. Studies shaped within empirical theology or the psychology of religion have shown how thinking types are drawn more to the God of justice while feeling types are drawn more to the God of mercy (see Francis & Jones, 2024). This perspective on decision-making has been applied to clergy studies and religious leadership by Oswald and Kroeger (1988), Osborne (2016) and Ross and Francis (2020).

The decision-making processes related to same-sex relationships within the Anglican Communion need to balance the theological debate about the issue with the consequences of those debates on the integrity of the Communion itself. The contention here is that this balance is partly about balancing the two judging functions of thinking and feeling. The thinking function pushes for integrity of principle and truth and will prioritize that over fudged attempts at harmonization. The feeling function emphasizes empathy with others and maintaining harmony and unity at all costs. If thinking dominates the process, there will be a tendency for different sides to battle for theological truth and to hold to it even if this means fragmentation. If feeling dominates the process, there will be a tendency for different sides to downplay their theological differences and find some way of maintaining

unity, even if this leaves behind muddy theological waters. Looking at how two neighbouring provinces have wrestled with this issue may reveal how different priorities have led to different outcomes.

## Method

Data were collected during autumn 2022 with material taken from either the websites of the Anglican Provinces or from websites generated by a 'Google' search of key terms such as 'Anglican', 'same-sex marriage', 'same-sex blessing' and 'Anglican Church breakaway', in relation to each of the provinces. Information gathered consisted of: the website uniform resource locator with the date it was accessed; the article title; the publication name; the date of publication; the author (if one was given) and the text itself. This resulted in 273 pages of collected data. The material for each province was grouped together and then placed in chronological order (sometimes material reported early had been superseded), additional evidence was followed up, and different sources were cross-checked before a narrative for each province was produced.

Analysis of the content of material found on websites is a research method that has previously been employed within the field of education (Wilkinson, 2019, 2021), and within church-related studies (ap Siôn & Edwards, 2012; Edwards & ap Siôn, 2015; McKenna, Francis, & Stewart, 2022, *in press*; McKenna, Francis, & Jones, 2024; Francis, McKenna, & Jones, 2024). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), one of the benefits of content analysis is that because 'data are in a permanent form (texts), verification through re-analysis and replication is possible' (p.674). This may be true when dealing with the written text of a book, print newspaper or pictures and photographs. However, when applied to data captured from websites, it is not strictly true. Website information is not permanent and can change on a frequent basis. Despite this, the information available at any one time can be captured and analysed to good effect. Hence, it was the 273-page document containing the information captured between August and November 2022, which was subjected to content analysis. Robson (1993) identified the problem of 'information availability' where 'information which is difficult to get hold of gets less attention than that which is easier to obtain' (p. 374). It is possible that material was not identified because only a limited number of keywords were searched, or because material had since been removed from the web so that the current research will not have captured it. However, while the text document may be a partial record of what might have been available, it was accurate when the research was carried out between August and November 2022.

In our analysis of the available text, we have noted the following criteria as differentiating between evidence of the feeling function and evidence of the thinking function:

- in terms of process: striving to assert conformity (thinking), *versus* striving to include diversity (feeling)

- in terms of priorities: embracing commitment to truth and clarity (thinking), *versus* embracing commitment to harmony and accepting blurred edges (feeling)
- in terms of style: promoting adversarial appeal to legal processes (thinking), *versus* promoting reconciliatory appeal to relational processes (feeling)
- in terms of schedule: displaying a desire to get things settled (thinking), *versus* displaying a desire to put off decisions that may be divisive (feeling).

## Results

### *The Anglican Church in New Zealand*

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia consists of three partners: Tikanga Māori, Tikanga Pakeha and Tikanga Pasefika. It is the Tikanga Pakeha, which has seven dioceses, that has gone through the process of permitting same-sex blessing (we have used 'New Zealand' to refer to this partnership in the province). Diversity of opinion on same-sex blessing was clear throughout the process in New Zealand, and the outcome of approving same-sex blessing was divisive in the sense of clergy and congregations leaving the Church, but generally, throughout the process, the tone was eirenic, with a dominant commitment to harmony and the acceptance of diverging positions. In psychological type terms, the debate was managed within a culture familiar to feeling types.

In New Zealand, the decision to allow blessings for couples in same-sex relationships was made on 9 May 2018 and occurred after 'almost 50 years of earnest debate about human sexuality' within the Church (Taonga News, 2018a). Prior to 2018, several dioceses had shown support for same-sex relationships and clergy involvement in such services was not unknown. According to Davidson (2011), when writing about a civil union of a same-sex couple that took place in the Diocese of Auckland in 2005, although Anglican clergy were not officially permitted to perform a civil union, they could do so if they were registered as civil celebrants, and if they acted in a private capacity. Similarly, Sweet (2013) cites the bishop's chaplain in the Anglican Diocese of Waiapu stating that she had, 'started the millennium by blessing a couple of young lesbians on the beach at Camp Bay near Christchurch, because that's how I wanted to start the millennium'. Here are signs of compromise (clergy can function as civil celebrants) and the expectation that recrimination will not rebound on individual actions. Here are people operating within a feeling culture.

In November 2011, the Church set up a doctrinal commission (the Ma Whea Commission) to look at the 'biblical and theological work done' by the Church on 'issues surrounding Christian ethics, human sexuality and the blessing and ordination of people in same-sex relationships, including missiological, doctrinal, canonical, cultural and pastoral issues' (<https://www.anglican.org.nz/News/Ma-Whea-Commission-on-Same-Gender-Relationships-Ordination-and-Blessing>).

The commission reported to General Synod in 2014 (Fisher, 2014; New Zealand Herald, 2014; Taonga News, 2014). In a resolution (Motion 30) on the issue, a further working group was appointed to report to General Synod in 2016. This

working group would report on 'a process and structure' that would allow those clergy who wished to bless same-sex relationships to do so, would include proposals for a liturgy and would ensure that clergy who believed that same-sex blessing was contrary to 'scripture, doctrine, tikanga or civil law' would be free to dissent (Taonga News, 2014). Here is a feeling approach that anticipates that opposing views may nonetheless coexist. The resolution apologized to the LGBT community, stating that the Church had 'too often ... been complicit in homophobic thinking' and had 'failed to speak out against hatred and violence against those with same-gender attraction' (Fisher, 2014). It also noted that the Church was 'acutely aware of the desire of some clergy to make further response pastorally and prayerfully to LGBT people in their faith communities' (Taonga News, 2014). Here is a feeling approach that prioritizes the individuals who feel excluded. In recognition of this, and aware that the working group would not be reporting for a further two years, the General Synod resolution advised that clergy should be permitted, with approval of their bishop and vestry, 'to recognise in public worship' same-sex civil unions though such could not 'be marriage or a rite of blessing of a same-gender relationship' (Taonga News, 2014). Thus, civil same-sex marriages could be acknowledged, celebrated and prayed for but not blessed within churches. The Archbishop of Tikanga Pakeha maintained that the decisions made by the General Synod had been committed to protecting diversity in the Church, acknowledging that there needed to be recognition of two divergent views, including the views of those who held deeply that marriage could only be between a man and a woman: 'we wish to move towards the ability to bless committed same-sex relationships but ... we need to find a way in the context of our Church to hold two completely divergent views with their own integrity' (New Zealand Herald, 2014). Here the feeling approach is taking the long view to preserve harmony.

In response, in 2014, a vicar in the Diocese of Auckland quit the Anglican Church taking with him half of his staff and two-thirds of the churchwardens because he could not reconcile the decision of the Church to recognize same-sex relationships with his ordination vows maintaining that this was 'not because we have a problem with people who are in a same-sex relationship but because of the commitment we have to shaping our lives around the teachings of the Bible' (Fisher, 2014). In riposte, the Bishop of Auckland accepted that there had been 'confusion and even anger' over the Synod vote, but that he respected the vicar's decision and 'accepted the inevitable consequence that his license as vicar must lapse as a result' (Anglican Ink, 2014). Confronted with a strong thinking response, the archbishop shows respect for and acceptance of the decision. Here is a feeling response.

The working group set up in 2014 to explore ways to respond to couples in same-sex relationships presented its final report, 'A Way Forward', at the General Synod in May 2016. However, at this Synod, hopes were dashed that progress would be made on approval for same-sex blessing for couples who had already married, with the decision postponed for a further two years (Collins, 2016). While a thinking response may have forced a divisive decision, a feeling response prefers procrastination, postponing the decision for another day. The Synod decided not to adopt the new liturgy for blessing same-sex unions developed over the preceding two years. While the Synod agreed a motion (Motion 30) to receive with thanksgiving the report and its recommendations, it voted to send the issue back to



another working group to report back to the next Synod in 2018 when there would be 'a firm expectation that a decision to move forward will be made' (Clarke-Morris, 2016). The 2016 proposals, if approved, would have authorized new rites of blessing as 'additional formularies' rather than doctrinal changes (ACNS, 2018b). According to Clarke-Morris (2016), it meant that the two proposed formularies (services of blessing) could not be considered across the wider Church on their first step towards entering canon law. The Synod (Motion 29) recommended a further working group be established and appointed by the three Primates to consider possible structural arrangements within the wider Church that would safeguard different theological convictions concerning the blessing of same-sex relationships (Clarke-Morris, 2016; Collins, 2016; GayNZ, 2016; Wyatt, 2016). It was hoped that such a structure would allow those who held differing convictions about same-sex relationships to remain together in the Church. Here is the feeling approach prioritizing the vision for future harmony and pleading for patience against the inevitable pain. In a joint statement, the three Primates said that they were:

aware of the considerable pain that this decision will cause to those most affected. But we are confident that our determination to work together across our differences will bring us to a place of dignity and justice for everyone. (Clarke-Morris, 2016).

The motion to take extra time before decision-making was moved jointly by a bishop from the Diocese of Waiapu, which supported the blessing of same-sex relationships, and a theologian from the Diocese of Nelson, which was opposed (Collins, 2016). Here is evidence of a feeling approach setting aside theological differences to allow time for more harmonisation.

According to Wyatt (2016), between February 2016, when its draft proposals were published, until the Synod decision in May 2016, the report had been 'the subject of fierce debate within the Church'. While the Tikanga Māori and the Tikanga Pasifika of the Church were willing to allow the proposals to go forward, the seven dioceses that made up the Tikanga Pakeha asked for amendments. Two diocesan synods, Christchurch and Nelson, proposed motions that urged the Church to hold back from endorsing any change until it had undertaken a significant period of theological reflection and consultation (Wyatt, 2016). Whatever the underlying motivation, here is a feeling approach that would prefer delay to immediate conflict.

Some in the Church were disappointed that a decision on same-sex blessing had been delayed for a further two years. The minister at St-Matthew-in-the-City in Auckland lamented that the Church had chosen unity over justice, that 'the Synod has allowed the views of 'conservatives' to rule, rather than working for the just inclusion of all faithful people in the life of the Church' (Collins, 2016, GayNZ, 2016). This appeal to justice is characteristic of a thinking approach, on this occasion arguing for inclusivity and supporting a liberal position juxtaposed with the conservative position. Others, however, were appreciative of the extra time that Motion 29 would give to the debate. An Archdeacon from Nelson diocese commented that for conservatives:



the A Way Forward report left us feeling unprotected in our theological position. The new working group needs to constantly come back to the conservatives, to be sure that the recommendations are acceptable to them, before they bring it back to the next General Synod . . . But there is a definite will from the conservatives to look for a way that will protect our integrity and allow us to stay together. (Clarke-Morris, 2016)

While these conservatives were seeking the protection of their integrity, they were not wishing to go separate ways. Here again is evidence of the feeling function.

In due course, on 9 May 2018, the General Synod of the Anglican Church in New Zealand passed a resolution to allow the blessing of same-sex marriages or civil unions (ACANZP, 2018; ACNS, 2018a; ACNS, 2018b; Taonga News, 2018a; Taonga News, 2018b; Church Times, 2018). The meeting of the General Synod accepted the final report (Motion 29) of the working group set up after the 2016 General Synod and supported in principle the proposed constitutional and canonical changes needed before blessings could be offered. Motion 29 recommended no change to the Church's official definition of marriage as a union between one man and one woman but said that individual bishops should be able to use existing canonical provisions to hold 'a non-formulary service' allowing for the blessing of same-sex relationships. Specifically, the report recommended that bishops should be able to decide whether to authorize a service of blessing for 'two people regardless of their sex or sexual orientation', using provisions already within the province's canons for 'a non-formulary service', while it also reiterated 'that the Church's teaching on the nature of marriage is to affirm marriage as between a man and a woman' (ACANZP, 2018, p. 3). The resolution also stated that the existing canon should be amended to ensure that members of the clergy would have immunity from complaint either for agreeing to bless such relationships or for refusing to do so (ACANZP, 2018, p. 7). The report also recognized that there might be clergy or ministry units who would wish 'to leave this Church as a result of the recommendations made in this report' and urged 'respectful conversations' with them (ACNS, 2018b). This notion of respectful conversations is indicative of a feeling approach.

According to ACNS (2018a), the motion to accept the report from the working group passed by a large majority. In a separate resolution, the General Synod noted that churches in the Diocese of Polynesia would not have to change their practice regarding same-sex blessing (ACNS, 2018a; Taonga News, 2018b). Thus, this separate motion acknowledged that the Pacific Island countries (Samoa, Tonga and Fiji) did not recognize unions between people of the same gender and accepted that a debate at the Polynesia Diocesan Synod had shown its members were opposed to the blessing of same-sex relationships (ACNS, 2018a). However, although there was opposition to the blessing of same-sex relationships within the Diocese of Polynesia, its members did not wish to 'be an obstacle in the journey of Tikanga Māori and Tikanga Pakeha towards the blessing of same-gender relations in Aotearoa New Zealand' (ACNS, 2018a). Hence, the Diocese of Polynesia abstained from the vote on blessings. This generous and inclusive attitude reflects a feeling approach.

In response to the General Synod vote approving the blessing of same-gender relationships, the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, Dr Josiah Idowu-Fearon, said:

The Anglican Communion is a family of autonomous but interdependent Churches. It is the formal view in the Communion that marriage is the lifelong union of a man and a woman, and I am heartened that this resolution means there is no change in the central teaching on marriage in the province of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. There has been a long, prayerful process in the province in reaching this point with deeply held convictions on both sides of the debate. I hope and believe that this resolution recognised that difference without division is possible. (ACNS, 2018a)

The vote to approve same-sex blessing, while retaining marriage for opposite-sex couples, was an attempt to reach compromise on a divisive issue. However, after the Synod vote, two members of the Synod announced their immediate resignations in a letter stating that the passing of the report:

finds us left behind and unable to move forward with you in good conscience. We leave with no anger or bitterness in our hearts, and we wish you the best as you seek to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. (Church Times, 2018)

Subsequently, a parish in Christchurch and three other parishes in the diocese, along with eight ministers who resigned from their posts, decided to disaffiliate from the Anglican Church in New Zealand and create a new church (Gates, 2018; McKenzie, 2020). It was reported that the leader of the breakaway church had claimed that the schism had been civilized and polite in contrast to what had occurred in North America where it had been chaos with legal disputes and arguments (Gates, 2018). The dominant culture of a feeling approach to decision-making evident in New Zealand seems to have extended even to the way in which disagreement and separation were expressed.

In due course, and after months of unsuccessful negotiations between this new church and the Anglican Church over alternatives, the Anglican Church in New Zealand officially fractured when a new independent diocese was created and 12 conservative Anglican parishes across New Zealand seceded and formed a new Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (GAFCON) affiliated Church (Christian Today, 2019; Gates, 2018; McKenzie, 2020). The new Church named the Church of Confessing Anglicans (CCAs) proclaimed:

we are a new Anglican diocese in these Islands, standing firmly in Anglican faith and practice, and structurally distinct from the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. (Christian Today, 2019)

According to McKenzie (2020), in the two years following the 2018 vote, the dispute had 'polarised hundreds of thousands of Anglicans' and had 'broken apart congregations'. However, he maintained that schism was not inevitable noting how the debate had been most tempestuous in 2016 when the dioceses of Nelson and Christchurch had both threatened schism in response to the proposals being considered. At that time, the Archbishop of the Tikanga Pakeha had believed they were facing 'the breakaway of tens of thousands of Anglicans'. However, according to McKenzie (2020), compromises and consultation had soothed the fractiousness.

Compromise and consultation are clear indicators of a feeling approach. Moreover, the 2018 reforms only allowed local bishops to decide whether to permit blessings in their area. In view of the concessions made, McKenzie posited that the belief of some in the Church was that schism only occurred because of Australian interference and meddling, in particular, the influence of the conservative Diocese of Sydney concluding that it was 'an open question whether the Church of Confessing Anglicans would have chosen to schism without the influential conservative evangelicals across the Tasman urging them to do so' (McKenzie, 2020).

The extent of the Anglican division in New Zealand has been questioned by Douglass (2022) who notes how the most affected area was the Diocese of Christchurch, where the leader of the new church was a parish priest and where three parishes associated with the CCAs had been established. Douglass (2022) cites a historian of the New Zealand church (Professor Peter Lineham), a member of both Anglican and Baptist churches, and a gay man, and his assertion that the decision to bless same-sex relationships has had little effect on the wider community with such blessings being rare, 'the LGBT community is not that impressed by the ... very, very cautious tiptoeing into the water. And how many blessings have been conducted of same sex marriages? I would say virtually none'. While Douglass (2022), acknowledges that the CCAs has gathered 17 congregations, Professor Lineham is cited as describing this as 'a very limited impact' when New Zealand is considered a nation of 5 million people and about 500 Anglican congregations.

At the 2018 General Synod, the passing of another motion (Motion 7) offered a compromise to parishes that opposed same-sex blessing by facilitating provision to establish a 'Christian Community' within the Church (Douglass, 2022; Taonga News, 2020). The Anglican Community of St Mark (ACM) was officially launched on 6 November 2020 'to support, nurture and protect conservative Anglican parishes' (Taonga News, 2020). Parishes were permitted to join this community if two-thirds of the congregation had voted to do so. Here is another feeling-type initiative reaching out to maintain harmony. At a parish in Christchurch, 88% voted to join (Taonga News, 2020). Such parishes could refrain from same-sex blessing. According to Douglass (2022), the website of the ACM claims to represent '1300 individual Anglican Christians and nine parishes across New Zealand, from Auckland to Dunedin' suggesting that, like the CCAs, its reach is not as significant as might have been expected. The Chair of the Community (also a vicar at a parish in Auckland) explained his hope that fellow Anglicans would come to understand how the new Community contributes positively to the goal of 'unity with integrity' in the Church:

Our desire is to hold the Church together, because with it we are stronger. We are expressing our different way of being the Church, which always has Christ at the centre. (Taonga News, 2020)

The debate on the issue of same-sex marriage may continue within the Anglican Church in New Zealand, but the church in 2018 expressed its wish that this would, for the foreseeable future, take place informally:

We submit this report in the hope that the structural changes proposed will allow the opportunity for faithful Anglicans to remain engaged in an ongoing fair and robust debate on human sexuality in this Church . . . and at the same time accomplish a balance along the theological spectrum, between those who wish to conduct the blessings of relationships and those who do not. (ACANZP, 2018, p. 16)

Here the strength of a process shaped by the feeling approach is seen in the recognition that the conversation is not yet concluded. There is more to follow.

### ***The Anglican Church of Australia***

There are five regional provinces in Australia; Tasmania is extra-provincial. There are 23 dioceses, some of which have decided to allow same-sex blessing, while others have not done so. Such diversity is rooted in the rich and wider diversity among the dioceses and the distinctive character of Sydney rooted in the Reformed tradition (see, for example, Judd, 1987; Shorter, 2023). Diversity of opinion on same-sex blessing was also clear throughout the process in Australia, but the outcome of giving approval to same-sex blessing was more acrimonious. Generally, throughout the process, the tone was more polemical. In psychological type terms, the debate was managed within a culture familiar to thinking types.

The question as to whether civil same-sex marriages should be permitted to be blessed generated much disagreement within the Anglican Church in Australia over many years. Pre-dating the 2017 Australian Government decision to approve civil same-sex marriage, in 2013, the Synod of the Diocese of Perth voted to recognize same-sex relationships. The clergy and laity of the Synod voted by a two-thirds majority in favour of legal acknowledgement of the civil unions of same-sex couples (ABC News, 2013). The motion needed the support of the Archbishop of Perth before it could be officially adopted. However, the archbishop dissented from that vote and rejected the motion explaining why he did so by drawing attention to the fact that civil same-sex marriage had not yet been sanctioned within Australia (O'Keefe, 2013). In Australia, the scene was set by a synodical process in one diocese. Here is evidence of a thinking approach that policy can be determined by a majority vote. The archbishop, however, uses his structural role in synod to undermine the outcome. Despite this, there was evidence that in Perth a blessing of a same-sex couple had taken place even before civil same-sex marriage was approved (Moodie, 2016). According to Sandeman (2021), such practice was not unusual with 'unofficial blessings' having occurred in the Diocese of Perth for some years.

On 7 September 2017, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia reiterated its traditional view of marriage when it adopted a resolution, *Marriage, Same-Sex Marriage and the Blessing of Same-Sex Relationships*, that stated 'the doctrine of our Church, in line with traditional Christian teaching, is that marriage is an exclusive and lifelong union of a man and a woman' (Anglican Church of Australia General Synod, 2017, p. 10). In line with a thinking approach, the priority question from the outset was concerned with identifying the exclusive truth of underlying theological principles rather than searching for inclusive ways to resolve the issues.

The 2017 General Synod also passed a resolution that admonished the decision of the Scottish Episcopal Church to amend their Canon on Marriage by adding a new section that allowed clergy to solemnize marriage between same-sex couples, noting with regret that the step was contrary to the doctrine of the Church, expressing support for those Anglicans who might leave the Scottish Episcopal Church and praying that the Scottish Episcopal Church would return to the doctrine of Christ in the matter and that impaired relationships would be restored (Anglican Church of Australia General Synod, 2017, p. 4). Here is clear evidence of a thinking approach utilizing the legal processes, not only to enforce uniformity in Australia but also to censure the Scottish Episcopal Church.

In March 2018, the Anglican Church of Australia's response to the passing of civil same-sex marriage legislation in Australia was decided at the bishops' annual meeting in Canberra. Here, the bishops declared that it was not 'appropriate' for same-sex weddings to take place on Anglican church property, given the Church's doctrine of marriage as being between a man and a woman (Porter, 2018a). As outlined by Porter (2018a), the resolution effectively barred Anglican clergy from any involvement with same-sex weddings, although there was agreement to give 'further consideration' to three concerns: the appropriate content of informal prayer for same-sex couples outside a public service; exploration of the difference between blessing and solemnising a marriage and to issues involved in Anglican officials being present at a same-sex marriage or blessing. Here, the thinking approach is working out logical distinctions and identifying principles against which practice can be measured.

While the Church's General Synod may have repeatedly held to the traditional view of marriage, some individual church synods were expressing support for same-sex blessing with the Synod of the Diocese of Ballarat passing a motion in October 2018 in support of such. According to Ould (2018), the motion: affirmed that all people be accorded equal dignity regardless of their sexuality or gender; acknowledged the reality of the change in Australian marriage law to include same-sex couples; commended the pastoral value of a Form of Blessing of a Marriage for optional use within the Diocese of Ballarat and asked the Bishop of Ballarat to authorize such a liturgy as soon as practicable. Operating within a dominant thinking culture, here is evidence of a minority feeling position pressing for inclusivity. In response, the Bishop of Ballarat decided not to authorize such a liturgy. According to Ould (2018), authorization of a same-sex marriage blessing would have set the bishop against the vast majority of the Anglican Church of Australia, and his fellow bishops. Within this dominant thinking culture, the Bishop of Ballarat fears the consequences of breaking rank.

Subsequently, in 2019, the Diocese of Wangaratta and the Diocese of Newcastle voted in favour of blessing couples married in civil ceremonies. The vote in the Diocese of Wangaratta in Victoria permitted priests officially to bless same-sex couples who had already married in a civil ceremony, making it the first Australian diocese to do so (Jacobs, 2020; Ortolan, 2019; Porter, 2018b; Porter, 2019). The regulation included a prescribed liturgy for the service, but ministers were not compelled to conduct such a blessing, 'if to do so would offend their conscience'. According to Ould (2022), the proposed service did not bless the marriage, but the individuals in it. Here is a thinking culture that proposes a logical distinction

between blessing the marriage and blessing the individuals. This distinction is made in the name of justice so as not to offend their consciences.

Porter (2019) outlines the justification given by the Bishop of Wangaratta for his supportive position when he advised the Synod that there was:

no legal or theological reason for our not proceeding ... the Bible, properly and critically read ... formative factors in theology ... leads inextricably to the conclusion that loving monogamous faithful Christian persons ought to receive the blessing of God in their church to strengthen them for their lives as disciples.

Here the Bishop of Wangaratta is operating within a thinking culture, making the case for an inclusive position on the basis of a critically informed reading of scripture. In contrast, there were those who condemned the decision taken in the Diocese of Wangaratta. The Archbishop of Sydney said that the move would:

fracture the Anglican Church of Australia ... The doctrine of our Church is not determined by 67 members of a regional synod in Victoria, nor is it changed by what they may purport to authorize. (Porter, 2019)

It was planned that the first same-sex blessing service in Wangaratta would take place a couple of weeks after the Synod vote. However, this was postponed when the Archbishop of Melbourne referred the matter to the Australian Church's highest court, the Appellate Tribunal. The Archbishop wanted to see if the proposed blessing conformed to the basic principles of the national Church's constitution and asked that the liturgy not be used while the tribunal deliberated (Ortolan, 2019; Porter, 2019, 2020). Here, both the Archbishop of Sydney and the Archbishop of Melbourne are operating within the thinking culture of working within the legislative structures. As a result, the Bishop of Wangaratta conducted a service of prayer and thanksgiving for the couple (two priests in a civil marriage) instead of a blessing (Jacobs, 2020).

Following the decision in Wangaratta, in October 2019, the Synod of the Diocese of Newcastle voted in favour of two bills: one permitting the blessing of same-sex couples by allowing ministers to bless those married according to the Marriage Act, and the other preventing a cleric from being disciplined for choosing to participate or not participate in a same-sex blessing. The same form of service for the blessing, as approved by Wangaratta, was to be used and no minister was to be forced to conduct such a service if it went against their conscience (McNab, 2019; Porter, 2020). As in Wangaratta, the bills passed by the Newcastle Synod were to be considered by the Appellate Tribunal and no changes were to be made until its ruling. Here, one aspect of the legislative structure (the Newcastle Synod) was held back by the Appellate Tribunal, as indicative of a thinking culture.

The outcome of the Appellate Tribunal decision was made on 11 November 2020 and was widely reported (Jacobs, 2020; Koziol, 2020; Lee & Porter, 2020; Porter, 2020; Sandeman, 2020; Taylor, 2020). The tribunal voted five-to-one in favour of priests being allowed to bless couples already married under civil law. It was to be left to each diocese as to whether they would pass local rules to permit such blessings



(Koziol, 2020). According to Jacobs (2020), the decision was made on the grounds that there was nothing in scriptural teachings preventing clergy from blessing those married under civil law. The Appellate Tribunal ruled that:

Wangaratta Diocese's proposed service for the blessing of persons married in accordance with the Marriage Act does not entail the solemnisation of marriage; is authorised by the Canon Concerning Services 1992; and is not inconsistent with the Fundamental Declarations and Ruling Principles of the Constitution of the Church. (Sandeman, 2020)

Further, in reference to the bill proposed by the Diocese of Newcastle and to whether it could protect its clergy from any discipline for performing same-sex blessings, the tribunal stated that the diocese had:

authority to amend its own diocesan clergy discipline regime in relation to clergy who bless or are party to a same-sex marriage . . . this would not affect the constitutional jurisdiction of diocesan tribunals to determine charges for offences created by the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia or by any Canon of the General Synod that is in force in the Diocese. (Porter, 2020)

According to Lee and Porter (2020), the bishops of all the Australian dioceses then held rapid virtual meetings to review the tribunal decision, and it was expected, in the interests of church unity, that they would decree no blessings should go ahead. However, they report that the bishops in fact urged clergy to consider carefully 'whether or how to bless those married according to the Marriage Act'. According to Lee and Porter (2020), the Australian bishops had officially recognized that blessings could now go ahead. As such, the tribunal's ruling that dioceses could authorize same-sex blessings gave rise to the possibility that the national Anglican Church might have one doctrine (one-man-one-woman marriage as expressed in its prayerbook), and its regional expressions might adopt another (Sandeman, 2021). According to Sandeman (2021), this would not be incongruous because:

Australian Anglicans are different from every other Anglican Church in the world. Its dioceses have a lot of freedom to be different – the national Church has little power. That's why we have conservative Sydney and progressive Perth.

Subsequent to the tribunal ruling, the Dean of Brisbane announced that same-sex blessings would be allowed at St John's Cathedral in Brisbane (Ould, 2022). However, the Diocese of Sydney was not won over by the decision of the Appellate Tribunal (Davies, 2020; Foster, 2022; Koziol, 2020; Tong, Smith & Leite, 2022). The Anglican Archbishop of Sydney criticized the tribunal decision calling it 'the blessing of sin' (Davies, 2020), and stating that it was untenable to have some clergy providing blessings to same-sex couples while others did not. He maintained that 'it would be naive to think that mutually contradictory views on same-sex marriage can co-exist within our national Church . . . To pursue this course will not bring healing



but will only lead to a collapse in the fellowship that binds us together' (Koziol, 2020).

Likewise, in a legally focused response to the decision of the Appellate Tribunal to approve the Wangaratta blessing service, Foster (2022) concluded:

that as a matter of internal Anglican doctrine, the decision is contrary to the 'doctrine of the Church', which finds its ultimate source in the Bible. The Majority Opinion takes a too narrow view of the word 'doctrine' . . . may encourage a narrow view of the word to be taken by [secular] courts in the future, with the result that clauses protecting religious freedom may be unduly read down.

The opposing member of the six-person Appellate Tribunal who voted against the majority view was a Sydney lawyer and Sydney representative on the General Synod (Lee & Porter, 2020; Porter, 2020). The Diocese of Sydney is known for its strong and influential conservative position, as vehemently opposed to same-sex relationships, and holding to a 'very literal view' of Scripture (Davies, 2020). After the Diocese of Wangaratta voted to approve a service for same-sex blessing, the Archbishop of Sydney told Anglican supporters of same-sex marriage they should leave the Church. According to McNab (2019), he argued that those who wished to change the doctrine of the Church should start a new Church or join a Church more aligned to their views, rather than 'ruin' the Anglican Church by abandoning the teaching of scripture. After the Appellate Tribunal ruling, the Diocese of Sydney told its leadership that the Church was 'on a trajectory towards disintegration' (Koziol, 2020). Expressing an element of forewarning, Lee and Porter (2020) noted that Sydney, as the largest diocese in Australia:

would not countenance being part of an offshoot Church. It would want to establish itself as the 'true' Anglican Church in this country, laying claim to the name and status . . . . The battle over this issue, and who owns the name and church property, could well tie up lawyers and civil courts for years to come. Such a split would also further diminish Anglicanism as a voice for justice and equality in Australian society.

After the tribunal ruling the Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia, Archbishop Geoffrey Smith tried to contain the dispute within the Church by writing to bishops a letter that appeared to be an appeal to conservatives. In his letter, he stated that there had 'not been a flood of same-sex blessings following the Appellate Tribunal opinion. Not a flood, not a trickle. Not a drip', and went on to argue, 'we need to be clear that the opinion of the Appellate Tribunal has not changed the doctrine of the Anglican Church of Australia. The Appellate Tribunal can't change the doctrine of anything' (Sandeman, 2021). Porter (2022b) also reports how only two such blessings had occurred since the Appellate Tribunal had ruled that such services were constitutionally acceptable, quoting the Bishop of Ballarat, at the General Synod in May 2022, saying that 'it's hardly been a tsunami'.

Growing disunity in the Church was, however, exposed at the May 2022 General Synod when the Diocese of Sydney tried to impose its opposing same-sex marriage

agenda nationally but was thwarted when the bishops refused to endorse the Sydney position (Porter, 2022b). On 11 May 2022, General Synod considered a resolution introduced by the Archbishop of Sydney asserting that ‘the solemnization of a marriage between a same-sex couple is contrary to the teaching of Christ and the faith, ritual, ceremonial and/or discipline of this Church’ (Millard, 2022). The laity and the clergy approved the statement, but the bishops voted against it, hence the motion failed. The following day, delegates also rejected a resolution that would have approved same-sex marriage. The emphasis throughout this ongoing process was clearly reflecting the agenda of a thinking approach. Here, opposing parties are trying to impose unity grounded on the ‘right’ doctrine, rather than trying to listen to one another and to find ways for unity within diversity.

With the General Synod not having carried the motion put forward by the Diocese of Sydney that same-sex marriage and same-sex blessing were contrary to the teachings of the Church, in September 2022, the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney carried several motions urging changes to the way in which the diocese would interact with the national Church. The Diocese of Sydney declared a ‘breach of fellowship’ with the Australian Church because it was at odds with the Church on matters of doctrine and human sexuality (Porter, 2022c). According to Porter (2022b), until General Synod 2022, progressive dioceses may have held back on same-sex marriage blessings in the interest of national Church unity, but with that looking increasingly impossible, some dioceses might ‘step out confidently to embrace same-sex blessings and other progressive causes, just as they embraced women clergy 30 years ago’. Indeed, in January 2022, the blessing rite authorized by the Diocese of Wangaratta in 2019 was used to unofficially bless a same-sex marriage in the Diocese of Armidale in New South Wales (Porter, 2022a). The result, according to Ould (2022), may be ‘that more and more faithful Anglicans who hold to true unchanging doctrine will seek a new home’.

Thus, it was in August 2022 that the Anglican Church of Australia formally split. Conservatives who opposed same-sex marriage and same-sex blessing launched a breakaway movement, forming the Diocese of the Southern Cross, led by a former Archbishop of Sydney (Baker, 2022; Millard, 2022; Porter, 2022c). The Archbishop claimed the new Church would have ‘significant impact’, and would ‘send shivers down the spines of some bishops in the Anglican Church of Australia’ (cited in Baker, 2022). As explained by Baker (2022), the new Church would not be ‘in communion’ with the Archbishop of Canterbury but instead be aligned with GAFCON, the worldwide network of conservative Anglicans. The Australian Primate and Archbishop of Adelaide, the Most Revd Geoffrey Smith, described the diocese as ‘effectively a new denomination’ with ‘no formal or informal relationship or connection with the Anglican Church of Australia’ (Porter, 2022c). At the beginning of 2024, the Diocese of the Southern Cross listed seven churches on its website.

## Conclusion

Drawing on data provided by key informants from within the dioceses, Village (in press) constructed an account that suggested that provinces that had space and time for those of differing opinions to meet together tend to report more positive

outcomes in the process of considering same-sex blessing or same-sex marriage than provinces that were dominated by synodical processes and debates. Against this background, the present study established two aims. The first aim was to conceptualize the difference in approaches within the context of Jungian psychological type theory, differentiating between the functions of feeling (prioritizing subjective personal and interpersonal values) and the function of thinking (prioritizing objective analysis and debate). While the feeling function strives for harmony and embraces compromise, the thinking function strives for truth and eschews compromise. The second aim was to focus attention on the two contrasting contexts of New Zealand and Australia and to explore whether the narratives extant in the public domain of the internet coincided with the narratives proffered by key informers within the dioceses.

The paper needs to be assessed within the constraints of these two aims. By employing the Jungian lenses of feeling and thinking, we are neither implying that these are the only lenses available for analyzing the data, nor suggesting that feeling and thinking are functions that cannot be employed concurrently in the same context. Jungian theory is clear that both functions are complementary and need to be employed in dialogue (Ross & Francis, 2020). Rather, by employing the Jungian lenses of feeling and thinking, we are testing whether these lenses may bring unique and beneficial insight into understanding a complex and controversial issue faced by the Anglican Church. In other words, we are asking whether a situation that is construed as arising from theological differences may be illuminated by considering psychological differences.

In contrasting the narratives from internet searches, our aim has been to present these narratives openly and transparently. It is our view that these narratives speak eloquently for themselves. Within the account for New Zealand, we hear the consistent refrain of the Jungian function of feeling that is prioritizing harmony and the co-existence of difference. Within the account for Australia, we hear the consistent refrain of the Jungian function of thinking that is prioritizing the centrality of doctrine, the formal mechanisms of synodical procedures and the struggles for imposing uniformity. This does not mean that New Zealand has resolved the issues easily, nor that Australia has failed entirely to find ways of allowing different views to exist in the same Church. The evidence instead suggests two broadly different processes, each with evidence of both thinking and feeling judgments, but where thinking decision-making seemed to dominate in Australia and feeling decision-making seemed to dominate in New Zealand.

Although it was generally true that conservatives tended to function in thinking mode and liberals in feeling mode, there were examples of those who wanted change moving ahead without waiting for consensus, suggesting they were putting their liberal principles above a desire for unity. Similarly, some conservatives, while holding strongly to their principles on this issue, were reluctant to break away from the rest of the Church and sought ways to maintain unity. Nonetheless, there was a general tendency for conservatism to be associated with preference for the thinking function, as found elsewhere in the Anglican Church (Village, 2019).

The research was originally commissioned by Bishops in the Church of England to help inform their expectations regarding the impact of the process initiated by the Church of England to manage their debate on same-sex blessing and same-sex

marriage. We wonder, therefore, what the Church of England may have learned from our findings that could have illuminated the emergence of the hybrid process adopted in practice. The Living in Love and Faith initiative seems to have been initiated through the lens of the feeling function. The emphasis was on consultation and listening, processes that carry the capacity to overcome divisive differences and promote co-existence without denying difference. These are processes from which there tend to be winners rather than losers. Having begun this way, the Living in Love and Faith initiative was continued through the lens of the thinking function. It was handed across to the weighty machine of synodical processes with emphasis on debate, carefully formulated motions and amendments and processes that carry the capacity to polarize differences and to encourage adversarial, acrimonious and competitive entrenchment of positions. These are processes from which there tend to be clear winners and clear losers. Those who had felt during the first phase (shaped by the feeling function) as being empowered and heard by others may during the second phase (shaped by the thinking function) have felt disempowered and unheard. Such a hybrid process may carry with it disadvantages and dangers.

### **Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to the present study. The data collection was compressed into a short space of time by the nature of the commission. The data collection was restricted by the research terms employed. Data collection was restricted to seven Anglican Churches, while a richer narrative may have been generated by embracing the experience of other Anglican Churches and other denominations. The present analysis has focused exclusively on drawing data from a general internet search to compare New Zealand and Australia. The research has been conducted by a research group that has no personal experience or specialist knowledge about the Anglican Church in these two countries. In spite of these obvious limitations, the current analyses may be sufficient to stimulate further conversation about the Living in Love and Faith initiative within the Church of England and to encourage further research exploring the potential value of the Jungian lenses of thinking and feeling in illuminating and assessing decision-making processed within the Anglican Communion.

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