

An interview with Rev. Jay Behan, chairman of the newly formed FCA (NZ)



Rev. Jay Behan

Interview by Malcolm Falloon. Jay Behan is the Vicar of St Stephen's, Shirley, in the Christchurch Diocese.

Jay, thank you for speaking with me.

What is FCA?

FCA stands for the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans and is a global movement of orthodox Anglican believers within the Anglican Communion who are looking to link together despite our cultural differences in mutual accountability and support.

How did the wider FCA movement get started?

I think it really started as a result of what was happening in North America with the Episcopal Church and the Canadian Anglican Church. There were things going on which were really worrying and upsetting Anglicans around the world. FCA is really a coalition of orthodox Anglicans eager to continue to proclaim the good news of the Lord Jesus in the way that the Anglican Church has always done.

What need do you see FCA in New Zealand filling?

I think that in New Zealand when General Synod passed Motion 30 in 2014, although the motion didn't change anything in terms of our Church's doctrine, practice or constitution, it clearly signalled the direction in which the church was heading. And I think there is a need for conservative and orthodox Anglicans to respond in a way that is faithful and clear.

What do you hope FCA will achieve?

I hope that FCA (NZ) will be able to do a couple of things. We talk about wanting to promote faithfulness and to provide fellowship, and both those aspects are important.

On the first one, promoting faithfulness, the central issue is the church's understanding of homosexuality and how to respond pastorally to people in same-sex relationships. This is really

what Motion 30 is all about, and we are keen to put forward teaching on this issue from the Bible that is both clear and faithful, as well as being pastorally sensitive. There is some confusion now as to what the Bible teaches, or how we should view it, and those kind of things, and we will put forward clear teaching.

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But we hope to do so in a way that is gracious and pastorally sensitive. I think there are a number of middle-of-the-road Anglicans who have a gut feeling that the Bible is quite clear on this issue, but who fear that it might result in them being unloving or unjust. And because the cultural voice is so strong, a number of us pastors are reluctant to teach on it in our local churches because we're worried that would be polarising and divisive for our people. Consequently, most Anglicans don't get to hear that the teaching of the Scriptures is loving and is just. So we want to make sure that that is done as well as possible.

Then the second side of it is providing fellowship. Here we need to recognise that there has already been a split within the Anglican Church in New Zealand with people leaving, most notably, Charlie Hughes in Auckland and Michael Hewat (along with most of his congregation) in Hamilton. If our

Church continues along the current trajectory then that is only going to happen more and more. FCA (NZ) will deliberately and intentionally seek to hold us together whether we are inside or outside the Church of this province. And Michael Hewat, being on the board of FCA, is a strong voice to that already. Michael is someone who is still Anglican in terms of what he believes and practices, and through FCA we can still recognise him as Anglican and remain in fellowship with him.

So what's your role within FCA and how is it structured?

That's a good question because there have been some worries expressed that if you're part of a wider global movement like FCA, then you will somehow come under the control of Australia or Africa, which is not the case. In actual fact, it's very much like the Anglican Communion: while there is a network of relationships, each local province is autonomous, so we don't come under anyone else. We currently have a board of eight people from around the country, which I chair, and we will be inviting others to join us as members of FCA at our conferences in April.

Tell us about the two conferences in April.

Yes. The conferences will really be the launch of FCA and I hope that people will come along and judge for themselves who we are and what we are about. There's a one-day conference in Christchurch on 16 April, and then a larger event in Auckland on 18-20 April. I'm thrilled that we've got Vaughan Roberts, the Rector of St Ebbe's, Oxford, coming over. Not only do I think he's one of the best preachers in the world today but he also revealed a few years ago that he himself experiences same-sex attraction, yet leads a celibate life seeking to honour the Lord. So he speaks from a position of personal experience that a number of us don't have. And I have got huge confidence that he will give great teaching on, not just the principle of homosexuality, but also the pastoral implications of it and how it should be worked out. So I would encourage as many people as possible to come along to these conferences.